AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Julian Baldick is a lecturer in the Study of Religions at King's College, London.

Brenda Bolton's *The Medieval Reformation* was published in 1983.

Brian Bond is the author of *War and Society in Europe, 1870–1970*, 1984.

Sarah Bradford's biography *Princess Grace* was published last year.

James Campbell's *Invisible Country* was published last year.

Patrick Carnegy is the author of *Faust as Musician: A study of Thomas Mann's novel "Dr Faustus"*, 1973.

J. Duncan M. Derrett's most recent book is *The Making of Mark: The scriptural bases of the earliest gospel*, in two volumes, 1985.

John Edwards's *Christian Córdoba: The city and its region in the late Middle Ages* was published in 1982.

Michael Edwards's *Towards a Christian Poetics* was published earlier this year.

John Erickson is Director of Defence Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

Penelope Farmer's novel *The Summer Birds*, 1962, was reissued earlier this year.

B. A. Farrell is the author of *The Standing of Psychoanalysis*, 1981.

Edmund Fawcett is co-author, with Tony Thomas, of *America and the Americans*, 1983.

R. A. Fletcher's study of Diego Gelmírez of Santiago de Compostela was published last year.

Roderick Floud is Professor of Economic History at Birkbeck College, London.

Keith Hanley's edition of the *Selected Poems of George Meredith* was published in 1983.

Robert Irwin's *The Medieval Near East: The early Mamluk Sultanate 1250–1382* will be published next spring.

P. N. Johnson-Laird's most recent book, *Mental Models*, was published in 1983.

Emrys Jones is Goldsmiths' Professor of English at the University of Oxford. His *Scenic Form in Shakespeare*, 1971, will be reissued in paperback next month.

Peter Lomas is the author of *The Case for a Personal Psychotherapy*, 1981.

Jonathan Luxmoore is the Executive Editor at the Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies, London.

Stephen Medcalf is a Reader in English at the University of Sussex.

John Mole's most recent collection of poems is *In and Out of the Apple*, 1984.

David Mosse is working on a study of religion and caste in a village in Tamil Nadu.

David Pannick's *Judicial Review of the Death Penalty* was published in 1982.

Sidney Pollard's books include *The Wasting of the British Economy*, 1982.

Peter Quennell's books include *Byron: The years of fame*, 1935, third edition 1967, and *Romantic England*, 1970.

J. A. Secord's *Controversy in Victorian Geology: The Cambrian–Silurian Dispute* will be published next year.

A. W. B. Simpson is Professor of Law at the University of Chicago.

Clive Wake is Professor of Modern French African Literature at the University of Kent.

Bernard Wasserstein is Professor of History at Brandeis University.

Zinovy Zinik's novel, *Russkaya Sluzhba*, 1983, has been broadcast in an English adaptation by BBC Radio 3.

At auction

Sarah Bradford

"This booke was founde in Bolein in [*sic*] the feast of the exaltation of the crosse after the surrendre into the king Ma.ties handes, of the same towne", runs the inscription in a fine sixteenth-century hand on the flyleaf of an illuminated manuscript of a French translation of Cicero, *De Vraie Amitie*, and Guarino da Verona's *De la Difference du Vray Amy et du Flateur* (executed in South Flanders, *c*1492–94). "Found" is a euphemism for looted, since the manuscript, originally illuminated for and dedicated to Philippe de Crève-coeur, Marshal of France, was taken by the English from his castle in Boulogne on September 14, 1544, the day that the town surrendered to the armies of Henry VIII. Sold at Sotheby's on June 25, it was purchased for £44,000 by the Société des Manuscrits et Autographes Français to be deposited at the Bibliothèque Nationale. Several other manuscripts of French provenance also returned to France, notably an illuminated breviary of the mid-fifteenth century, executed for the great Carthusian house of Villeneuve-lès-Avignon, which was bought for £5,280 by the Bibliothèque Municipale of Avignon. Another fifteenth-century breviary of the Use of Valence was acquired for £4,950 by the Archives Municipales de Valence, and the missing half of the Hours of Françoise de Dinan, originally executed at Rennes, *c*1430–40, was bought for £41,800 by the Bibliothèque Municipale de Rennes.

Other Continental manuscripts returning via Sotheby's to the country of their origin included a single vellum leaf of Carolingian capitularies dating from the second quarter of the ninth century, purchased by the Düsseldorf dealer, Axel Bender, for £7,700 and a Suebian manuscript of Burchard of Ursberg's *History of the Emperor Frederick Barbarossa*, dating from the second half of the fifteenth century, which was acquired by the same dealer for £8,250. Two other German manuscripts of works by Berno of Reichenau were bought by Kraus; the first, on the liturgy and dating from the mid-eleventh century, for £19,800, and the second, an important treatise on Romanesque musical theory executed either in Reichenau or Freising *c*1025–50, for £28,600.

The most important manuscript was bought by the British Rail Pension Fund for £82,500. It comprised a somewhat torn bifolium of Eusebius' *Historia Ecclesiastica* which represents the second oldest known version of the text and is possibly, Sotheby's cataloguer claims, the oldest manuscript written in Britain. It is in a fine Irish half-uncial script and was executed either in Ireland or Northumbria in the early to middle seventh century. Its existence was unknown until 1984 when it was discovered forming the limp vellum wrapper of two sixteenth-century medical texts in the Folger Library. It is possible that the original manuscript may have formed part of the library at Jarrow and hence been used as a source-book by the Venerable Bede. It may have been taken by the monks to Durham with the relic of Bede in 1022 and subsequently, like another manuscript Bible of the same date and provenance, used as binder's waste in the bindings of the library of the Willoughby family of Middleton Hall near Sutton Coldfield. Middleton was sold by the Willoughbys in 1924 and this bifolium, or rather the medical texts of which it formed the binding, was first recorded in the possession of a Sutton Coldfield bookdealer in 1935.

Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts in the Grey Collection: A preliminary catalogue (20pp. Cape Town: South African Library. 0 86968 051 X) lists and describes some 120 manuscripts presented to the Library by Sir George Grey, Governor of the Cape, in 1861.

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Enquiries

WITH THE PERMISSION of Mrs Audrey Sutherland, I am collecting for publication the letters of her late husband John Sutherland (1919–1956), the Canadian poet, critic, editor of First Statement and Northern Review, and publisher of First Statement Press books. I would be grateful if any person owning or knowing of letters and other documents could contact me, Bruce Whiteman, 148 Herkimer Street #2, Hamilton ...

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Cover picture: An untitled painting (1962) by David Smith; it is on show at the Anthony d'Offay Gallery, 9 and 23 Dering Street, London W1, until August 24 in the exhibition *David Smith: Sprays from Bolton Landing.*

Knowing what to do

Philippa Foot

BERNARD WILLIAMS
Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy
230pp. Fontana. £3.95.
0 00 686001 X

It is not a trivial question, Socrates said: what we are talking about is how one should live. Or so Plato reports him, in one of the first books written about this subject. Like Socrates, he hoped that one could direct one's life, if necessary redirect it, through an understanding that was distinctively philosophical – that is to say, general and abstract, rationally reflective, and concerned with what can be known through different kinds of inquiry.

It is with these words that Bernard Williams begins his book, which, like the *Republic*, is about the question: how one should live. But unlike Socrates and Plato, Williams believes that philosophy can give us no answer. This is his thesis, and he describes it as sceptical, though it is, he says, sceptical rather about philosophy than about ethics. It is not that we cannot think in ethics, but that philosophy "can do little to determine how we should do so".

This conclusion may seem unsurprising. For perhaps we no longer expect philosophy to tell us how to live, and very properly insist that the subject needs no *raison d'être* except the understanding it brings: if philosophical reflection does not tell us how we should live our lives, it is none the worse for that.

Nevertheless, when Williams says that philosophy *cannot* produce an answer to the question "How should we live?" he is advancing a specific philosophical thesis, to be scrutinized with philosophical care. The idea may seem unsurprising because philosophy often seems remote from practical life, and anyway we are used to hearing from some moral philosophers that their task is to produce a neutral analysis of moral language, to be sharply distinguished from the "substantive" judgments by which, in our non-philosophical personae, we express our *attitudes* about right and wrong. If Williams's thesis is nevertheless surprising this is because he himself is a critic of these, recently dominant, theories. What, we must ask, has led him too to draw a significant line between philosophical reflections and thoughts about how life should be lived, thus disagreeing not only with Plato and Socrates but also with Aristotle, Kant and Mill?

In the answer to this question lies the story of this remarkably lively and enjoyable book. If it is not the whole story this is because it is a very rich book, containing excellent descriptions of a variety of moral theories, and innumerable original and often witty observations on topics encountered on the way.

There are three distinct phases in the argument. What Williams wants to insist first of all, is that philosophy cannot produce a "foundation" for morality, in that it cannot produce, for each and every person, a reason why he should concern himself with morality at all. (Williams puts the point slightly differently because he keeps the term "morality" for that special "ethical" position in which duty and obligation are treated as the centrally significant concepts. But by the "ethical" he means what most of us call "morality".) Someone who allows ethical considerations to weigh with him is one who does not decide all practical questions on grounds of self-interest or private affection, but rather gives original weight to the interests of other individuals and of society. The difficulty for the morally minded philosopher is to know what to say to a person who insists, like Thrasymachus in the *Republic*, that he sees no reason for ever adopting an ethical point of view. It is this age-old but thoroughly contemporary problem which engages Williams in the first part of his book. Is it possible, he asks, to find a "point of leverage", an Archimedean point, from which it can be shown that rationality demands the choice of the ethical life?

Two versions of this project are considered, the first consisting of an attempt to show that the ethical life is the *best* life for a human being, and therefore the one that it is rational to choose, while the second tries to derive the special rationality of ethical choices from the idea of rational action itself. (The first is, of course, associated with Aristotle, and the second with Kant.) Williams rejects them both, on grounds that tell us a lot about his own basic assumptions.

To the Aristotelian he objects that it simply cannot be shown that the life of justice is the only satisfying human life. For even if we recognize that the concept of a good life is, for many, shot through with moral values, this is, he thinks, only one perspective among others. Those whose "dispositions" are genuinely ethical will value moral goods such as justice as things valuable in themselves. This is, however, only these individuals' "inner point of view". Standing back from their own dispositions they will recognize an "outside view" from which these dispositions have no special status. Any one agent's perspective is "only one of many that are equally compatible with human nature". So philosophy, which takes this outer standpoint, cannot show the ethical life to be the only satisfactory life for everyone.

That this argument seems to Williams to be irrefutable shows that he is thoroughly imbued with the philosophy of Hume. For his "dispositions" are a substitute for Hume's "passions", ie, for the desires that Hume saw as the starting-point for all operations of practical reason. Practical reason gives us reasons for acting, and all reasons for acting depend in the end on subjective dispositions – which Williams has elsewhere spoken of in terms of each particular agent's "motivational set". Given these assumptions, it is inevitable that he should reject an Aristotelian way of arguing for the connection between practical reason and the moral life.

It is also inevitable that he should think it impossible to find a more Kantian foundation for ethics in the concept of rational action itself. The ethical point of view requires the kind of impartiality which gives weight to the interests and desires of others, and this is not, he thinks, implied by the idea of rational reflection. In speculative matters I must indeed try to reconcile my conclusions with all the evidence obtained by me or anyone else. But in practical reasoning my own desires have a special place, which reason itself does not give to those of others. So the starting-point of practical reason is subjective as that of theoretical reason is not.

Philosophy is, therefore, unable to provide a "foundation" for ethics by showing that rationality demands the choice of the ethical life. It might nevertheless be able to provide guide-lines for those who have made this choice. – that is for those who are committed to ethics. For an account of ethical thought might imply substantive judgments about, eg, the justice of acting in a certain way, even though no substantive answer could be given to Socrates' question in its general form. Williams does not rule out this possibility. He will not go along with those who, having distinguished philosophical ethics ("meta-ethics") from substantive ethics, insist that the former can tell us nothing about what is morally good or bad. But he doubts whether there is a general and substantive ethical theory to be had by stepping back from one's own more or less localized ethical assumptions and practices.

Williams is strengthened in this sceptical conclusion by his critical view of the two foremost contenders among current ethical theories of the substantive type. He considers as representatives first John Rawls's theory of justice and then R. M. Hare's utilitarianism; raising objections against each of them which are familiar, but which have perhaps never been better argued in a short space. More idiosyncratically, he asks why any such theory should be looked for. Why should any generalized and systematic theory be available? Such a theory would have to be given authority over our ordinary moral intuitions, as Rawls allows in his description of the process of coming to "reflective moral equilibrium", and as hard-line utilitarians allow when they say that some of our most cherished moral judgments may have to be corrected in the light of the principle of utility. Why, asks Williams, should we give any ethical theory such authority?

To this question he supposes many will reply that "reason itself" draws ethics "in the direction of theory and systematization". It is characteristic of utilitarians to argue that their opponents, who seldom produce a substitute for the principle of utility as a test of rightness and wrongness, are relying on unsupported and therefore *irrational* moral intuitions about particular cases. Williams counters such arguments by pointing out that ethical reasoning is not a matter of driving backwards to final basic principles, when it might at least *seem* desirable to have as few of these as possible, but of questioning some beliefs while keeping others constant. We do not question all our beliefs at once, but rather, as von Neurath said in another context, repair the ship at sea, one plank at a time. Having given up the search for basic principles "we might still be left with the possibility that for every practice there is some reason; what we shall have lost is the possibility that there should be some one reason for everything". And in any case "A practice may be so directly related to our experience that the reason it provides will simply count as stronger than any reason that might be advanced for it." Williams illustrates the dangers of substituting theoretical concepts for the ones we normally employ in giving ethical reasons by considering, as briefly as it deserves, Michael Tooley's suggestion that the category of *person* should be revised so as to exclude infants, thus giving us licence to kill these pre-personal beings.

The defects of *person* as a theoretical category represent a failing in that particular proposal, but they also illustrate failings in the theoretical enterprise more generally. How can we come to see the weakness of a theoretical concept except by reference to the everyday distinctions it is supposed to replace or justify, and by a sense of the life it is supposed to help us to lead? So far from having some special authority be-

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cause of their belonging to a theory, these conceptions, in relation to what they are required to do, are likely to be more arbitrary than those they are supposed to replace.

So Williams believes that instead of trying to systematize, finding reasons that are as general as possible and cutting down on the number of our ethical ideas, we should rather consider that we may now have too few, rather than too many. In this argument one sees his sympathy with Aristotle, both in the matter of the richness of the ancient theory of the virtues and because Aristotle rejects the idea that judgments must be codified under rules.

In the final, most controversial, phase of his argument Williams considers the objectivity of ethical thinking. Can there be knowledge in ethics as there is knowledge in the sciences? Or can ethical beliefs at least represent reality in some other way? Do they, for instance, have the degree of objectivity that we attribute to perceptual judgments, such as judgments about colours?

To such questions Williams gives an answer of a rather peculiar complication. He is ready to allow that in certain cultural circumstances there could be genuine ethical knowledge, because members of an "unreflective" society could use "thick" ethical concepts (replete with what used to be called "descriptive meaning"), and although these concepts would be action-guiding they could represent the world as it is. But this "knowledge" could be retained only in the absence of reflection, and would be lost as soon as its possessors stepped back from their own perspective and compared their ethical concepts with those of other societies: at the reflective level, at which different concepts may be rivals, knowledge disappears. Even if it can be shown that it is best for human beings to *have* certain concepts rather than others this will not yield other ethical truths.

The oddity of this, rather unsatisfactory, part of Williams's book is, of course, that the use of "thick" ethical concepts – such as courage, or honour, or fidelity – is not cut off from the most abstract ethical thought. It does not seem obvious that we can award one the title of knowledge while denying the status to the other. Nor is it clear just what Williams is denying when he expresses scepticism about reflective ethical judgments. He says that at this level ethics has no chance of being what it seems. But what does he mean? He says that here our ethical judgments are not "world-guided"; but is this any clearer than to say, as some have done, that ethical properties are not "part of the furniture of the universe"? Anyone who has wrestled with the problem of realism – with the difficulty of even saying what is at issue – will here recognize an old trouble. In what terms can one characterize "the world" which is supposed to be, or not to be, the object of a particular class of beliefs?

The answer given in this book is in terms of a pair of contrasts. By the first ethics is set over against science, which is said to represent reality as it might be seen even by investigators very different from ourselves, for instance ones who saw colours differently from us. But since he wants to deny to ethics the kind of objectivity that does belong to our colour judgments it is necessary for Williams also to contrast ethical beliefs with our more directly perceptual knowledge of the world. Never one to refuse a challenge, he does just this; though whether the result is satisfactory one may doubt. His suggestion is that if we explain why we see the world as we do through our senses we refer to a single physical reality, whereas explanations of ethical judgments will ultimately relate to conditions localized in different societies. But this suggestion merely begs the question against ethical reality. Perhaps the explanation of why different views are held in different communities is that certain things are, ethically speaking, the case; and that this truth is likely to be perceived, distorted, or ignored according to local conditions. For all that Williams's argument shows, there is no more reason to deny this for ethics than there is to deny the corresponding suggestion in the case of the physical world.

In his anti-realism, as in his account of practical reasoning, Williams is in agreement with Hume. And this may mean that his book will stand as an end rather than a beginning. For there are signs that Hume's long reign in the field of ethics is coming to an end. Already the flag of rebellion has been raised by John McDowell and others who have borrowed Wittgenstein's observations about rule-following and language to obtain (perhaps over-hastily) an anti-Humean account of reasons for action. And Paul Grice's completely new and extremely interesting metaphysical defence of absolute values is waiting in the wings ("Reply to Richards" in *Philosophical Grounds, of Rationality: Intentions, Categories, Ends*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press this year, edited by Richard Grandy and Richard Warner). If *Ethnics and the Limits of Philosophy* is, in the end, disapointing, it is because, like so many of us, Williams has been unable to make such a radical move. But unlike most of us he has certainly written a good book.

Powers for their own sakes

Michael Rosen

ANTHONY DE JASAY
The State
291pp. Oxford Blackwell. £17.50.
0 631 140255

BILL JORDAN
The State: Authority and autonomy
376pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £19.50.
0 631 142738

If the State did not exist would it be necessary to invent it? With this question Robert Nozick, in his *Anarchy, State and Utopia*, reopened a problem which the mainstream of political theory had long regarded as settled. Given the evident selfishness of mankind, is it not obvious that the State (or some equivalent coercive body) must be there, at least to ensure that agreements, once made, will be kept and that there is a sufficient supply of those public goods for which no market can be organized?

But, as Nozick and others have pointed out, the issue is not so simple. There is, first, the argument that, no matter what the utilitarian advantages, it is not for the State to coerce individuals into arrangements which they would not have come to by independent decision. Furthermore, much of the recent literature in games theory casts doubt on the traditional argument's basic assumption that only the threat of coercion prevents rational, self-interested parties from defecting from co-operative schemes.

Anthony de Jasay gives a lucid presentation of both these strands of thought and, as always in this original and engaging work, provides a splendid range of historical example to stimulate (and provoke) the reader. Yet, in adopting the desert-island approach to the analysis of the State, de Jasay is aiming to do more than just retrace Nozick's footsteps in the sand. His enterprise blends individualistic political theory in the Lockean tradition with historical reflection in the spirit of Tocqueville. (The relationship between the two is not always as clear as it might be, however; de Jasay – like Tocqueville – cannot resist a digression and shares his gift for turning a trenchant phrase to cover a gap in the argument.)

In essence, the case which de Jasay develops is this. Given that no modern State actually originated in the voluntary manner hypothesized by political theory (a point easily conceded), and given that political theory fails in its attempt to provide a legitimation for the State's centralized authority (a more contentious claim), we must abandon the idea that States exist in order to serve interests – whether the interests of a particular class or those of society as a whole. States, in fact, with rare and all too temporary exceptions, exist to preserve and increase their own discretionary political power, not for what they might do with it but for its own sake.

This bleak and dispiriting political vision is, happily, in complete contrast to the vigour and verve of de Jasay's exposition. Whether one agrees with his conclusions or not it is impossible not to admire the wit and erudition with which they are reached. De Jasay's indictment of the collectivist bias of liberal reformism is especially penetrating and he is savagely funny at the expense of the heads-I-win-tails-you-lose "dialectics" which pass for the Marxist theory of the State.

Yet, in the end, de Jasay's weakness may be just that he concedes too much to the tradition of political theory he is attacking. Although he disputes the claim that the State uses its power for social ends, he appears, nevertheless, to endorse the dominant representation of it as a unified, hierarchical structure of sovereignty confronting an atomized mass of subject-citizens. In consequence, he tends to understate the messiness of the real world and the degree to which States, whatever their intrinsic drives, have succumbed to forces hostile to the concentration and extension of their power.

Bill Jordan, like de Jasay, gives an analysis of the State which synthesizes empirical and theoretical aspects. But there – despite the coincidence of publisher and title – the resemblance ends. Jordan's book contains two ideas, one good and one bad, as well as a highly compressed and not always relevant summary of what everyone of any consequence has written on the subject.

Jordan's good idea is that political theory has paid too little attention to the notion of autonomy. Though it is not a new thought, it is well worth pointing out that autonomy is part of a family of political concepts which lies outside the conventional division between "positive" and "negative" concepts of liberty and that it represents an alternative in many ways preferable to both.

Yet Jordan's contention that the means to the realization of autonomy in modern industrial society is the establishment of a "social dividend" – the replacement of all tax and social-security benefits by a "universal unconditional weekly payment by the state to every citizen" – is quite unpersuasive. Leaving aside the economic impracticality of the idea (another unfortunate illustration of how far the test of socialist faith in the Labour Party these days seems to be the ability to add two and two together to get five) the reasoning behind it is faulty. Jordan's claim is that citizens are fundamentally unfree if, lacking property, they have no alternative but to sell their labour power. However, the consideration of a parallel claim makes the flaw in this argument apparent. Is it equally true that someone who lacks the means to engage in subsistence agriculture is fundamentally unfree because he has no alternative but to buy food from someone else? In each case needs and circumstances leave individuals with no reasonable alternative but to engage in exchanges of a certain kind. Yet this is far from proving that exchange takes place in a manner which is coercive or which violates their freedom. Whether this is the case or not, it is simply not demonstrated on the basis of the argument given by Jordan.

From de Jasay's point of view, a panacea such as Jordan's would actually worsen what it sets out to remedy – the subordination of the individual to the State. Jordan's equal payments principle does not avoid questions of redistribution – it equalizes only what people receive, not what they must contribute – and to ask the State to take such a series of necessarily contentious decisions will only reinforce what de Jasay sees as its spurious tendency to play the "moral arbiter" against its citizens.

Yet is there any real alternative? For individuals genuinely to hold rights *against* the State (rather than through it) they must have sufficient independent power to be able to defend their own interests. But, in modern societies where the coercive power of the State has, for one reason or another, been seriously weakened, all the evidence points to an alarming tendency for alternative "protective agencies" to develop. Citizens of Belfast or Beirut, clients of the Hongkong triads, or victims of the Mafia hardly need to be reminded that there is a good deal to be said for a State which can exercise a "monopoly of violence". However worried one is about the nightwatchman, one ought to think twice before taking away his club.

From the school of seeing

Idris Parry

ELIAS CANETTI
Das Augenspiel: Lebensgeschichte 1931–1937
353pp. Munich: Hanser. DM 39.80.
3446 142819

The third volume of autobiography by Elias Canetti – who is eighty this week – begins and ends with a death. In the first chapter Canetti continues from the incident which closed his previous volume, *Die Fackel im Ohr*: the death of his fictional character Kien in the flames of his library. In the last chapter he describes the death of his mother.

One death is real, the other fictitious. But what is real? Fiction exists because it can seem more real. The writer is the maker. Canetti has killed Franz Kien at the end of the novel *Die Blendung* (*Auto da Fé*). When we meet him now he is obsessed to the point of paralysis by this destruction. His world is empty. The fire which destroyed Kien and his books is as real to Canetti as the burning of the Palace of Justice in Vienna in 1927, an event he witnessed in the mob, an event he comes back to again and again as decisive in his development. In these opening pages we find that the horror of Kien's death in the flames has almost destroyed Canetti too. He can't write, he can't read. Stendhal and Gogol had been inspiring influences for the novel just completed, Stendhal for linguistic precision, Gogol for grotesque fancy. Now even these idols seem meaningless.

By chance he picks up a volume of Büchner which has been in his possession for two years, unopened. He reads a fragment of the fragment *Woyzeck*. The impact is tremendous. He reads it again, reads the whole play, reads it over and over, all night, rushes in the morning to tell his fiancée, Veza, about his discovery. She knows all about Büchner; she gives him *Lenz* to read. In comparison, his own work seems no more than a layer of dust, but his suicidal depression has also crumbled. Who but Büchner can *present* the futility of existence in such a way that humanity seems glorious?

This chapter sets the scene for what follows in the Vienna years up to 1937. In the previous volume Canetti said that there is no better way to discover reality than through pictures. One section of that book is called "The School of Hearing"; the new volume could just as well be called "The School of Seeing". Canetti brings to the forefront here the faculty he admired so much in Isaac Babel. When he recorded in *Die Fackel im Ohr* what was for him a most memorable meeting with Babel in Berlin, he spoke of the Russian's "thirsty eyes" and of the changing expression in his intensely observant gaze.

Canetti has a passion for people. His own sharp observation produces a series of unforgettable portraits, mostly of famous people but sometimes of complete unknowns. He has an eye for the grotesque, in appearance and behaviour. But expressive eyes in themselves become a recurrent motif in *Das Augenspiel*, and of course give the book its title. The author delights in the interplay of looks which everyone experiences, silent but expressive contacts, the probing which is both public and secret as messages are flashed to communicate love, trust, dismissal, fear, approval, hope. This transmission of mute signals reaches a climax in the final chapter at his mother's deathbed when she follows him with her reproachful dark eyes.

In the year after writing *Die Blendung* Canetti wrote his play *Hochzeit*. From then until the publication of the novel in 1935 he gave public readings from these two works, so that, although he was an unpublished author, he became known to other writers and critics. Hermann Broch and Robert Musil move through these pages as friends, seen in detail and with many anecdotes. So do other great figures, musicians and artists as well as authors. But the most meaningful character for Canetti is a man he watched for months in the café before exchanging a word with him. He resembled Karl Kraus. He was taciturn, but after half a century Canetti looks back on him as one of the most significant people in his life, a person of vast knowledge and quiet wisdom who radiated an aura of truth. He must have been one of those individuals who are important for what they are, not for what they do. His name was Dr Sonne, but inwardly Canetti called him "the Archangel Gabriel".

Another close friendship in this period was with the sculptor Fritz Wotruba. They came to regard each other as twin brothers. Wotruba, according to Canetti, was "the wildest figure in my life", and one can see how the physical boldness of the man must have appealed to Canetti's dramatic tendency. What this author admires is vital force. He describes going to Wotruba's studio under the railway arches and seeing him attack the stone "like a black panther", leaping from figure to figure with the urgency of a beast of prey. With equal affection he can describe Wotruba's Hungarian mother in her peasant head-scarf, working at the stove in their Vienna flat and inclined, when the spirit moved her, to throw plates at late-comers creeping through her kitchen.

Not all the famous people he knew are presented as attractive prospects. He begins his study of the conductor Hermann Scherchen with the remark: "He kept his lips tightly shut, so that no praise should escape them." Scherchen looms as a domineering figure. Sure enough, when he does speak, it is praise that issues from his mouth . . . self-praise, "songs of victory, one might say". He gives orders, he tolerates no rivals, he holds opinions which are final. According to Canetti, he was fond of the word "explosion" for a while. He might go to a museum, note by chance the date 1100 BC on several labels; some time soon he'd be bound to come out with the remark: "In 1100 BC there was an explosion in human affairs!"

This ruthless and masterly portrait of a bombastic figure ends in a surprising way. The ending reveals as much about Canetti as about Scherchen. To read Canetti, it is easy to think he shares his mother's conviction that it's impossible to have too low an opinion of mankind. Yet even as he strips the individual naked of pretence he can suddenly laugh with genuine joy because he has found human warmth, the promise of better things. The great bear Scherchen summons him by telegram to the railway station, where he will have an hour to wait between trains. "I went more out of curiosity than from inclination." Even before the train stops, Scherchen shouts to him through the open window: "I'm going to Peking to get married!" He had fallen in love with a Chinese girl he'd seen conducting Mozart in Brussels. He told her he would marry her as soon as she gave the word. She had now written. He had cancelled his concerts, was off on the Trans-Siberian express, would be away five days, couldn't spare any more time, would bring his bride back with him. "I had never known him like this; as he rushed on breathlessly, I felt I suddenly liked him." It is the dénouement to a fairy-tale. The monster is an amiable creature, after all. Who could resist such vitality?

Scherchen's enthusiasm is so appealing when one compares it with the irascibility of Musil, great writer though he was. When Canetti's novel was published he sent copies off to people whose opinion he would value, among them Thomas Mann. After some delay, a letter arrived from Mann. Its contents delighted Canetti. He rushed to the café, where Musil came to offer congratulations on his "great success". In his excitement Canetti blurted out: "And just think . . . I've had a long letter from Thomas Mann too!" Musil's face changed instantly. He turned away. It was the end of their friendship. Canetti had gone over to the enemy. He had mentioned the *NAME*.

Throughout the three volumes of autobiography Canetti wages a running battle with his mother. It concludes now with her death. As she lies dying in Paris he brings her roses which, he tells her, are "from the garden in Rustschuk". She believes him. They have of course been bought just round the corner, but with these roses Canetti takes her back to her childhood, as he takes us back to the beginning of the first book of autobiography and his earliest days in the small town on the lower Danube where he was born. So often they had teased her about the unusual size of her nostrils; she said they were so big because as a child she had stretched them to take in the scent of roses in her Bulgarian garden. These last pages of the book are among the most moving Canetti has written.

Like the other two books, this is not the kind of autobiography historians would approve for use in sober scholarship. Can we believe Canetti in his eightieth year when he showers us with such complexities of conversation and gesture, twists of thought even, which he claims to have experienced fifty years ago? Isn't there an element of fiction in this? There is indeed. But is our vague apprehension of history really truth? Like Arvers in Rilke's *Malte*, Canetti is a poet and hates the approximate. Speaking of his novel *Die Blendung*, he quotes the saying attributed to Dostoevsky and suggests that his book too came "from under Gogol's *Overcoat*". He means that, like the Russian story, it is an exact but fantastic delineation of the ordinary. And this is how we must regard this great work of autobiography. The reality of fiction can tell us more than any vague recollection of life.

Apart from its value as an aesthetic triumph, this book is a remarkable record of the intellectual ferment which was Vienna in the years before the Anschluss of 1938. What an amazing small society it was, now just a memory, vividly presented here through portraits of men and women, some admired by Canetti, others found contemptible, but all brought to life by the play and power of what Goethe called, in one of his poems, the "feeling eye".

A national conscience

Michael Butler

HEINRICH BÖLL
What's to Become of the Boy?: A memoir
Translated by Leila Vennewitz
82pp. Secker and Warburg. £7.95.
0 436 05456 6

Although in this brief memoir (reviewed in the original in the *TLS*, May 7, 1982) Heinrich Böll restricted his focus to the geographical area of Cologne during the crucial years 1933–7, the book possesses all the laconic humour, critical insight and controlled moral outrage which characterize the best of his writing. Unhappily, his sudden death last week at the age of 67 has given it a regrettable finality. Although he disliked the label, Böll represented more than any other West German writer "the conscience of the Nation". This book shows why. A new novel, *Frauen vor Flußlandschaft* set in the political hot-house of Bonn, has been announced for September; it is fitting that his sharp reminiscence of Nazi Germany should anticipate a last reckoning with contemporary West German mores.

In *What's to Become of the Boy?* Böll vividly conjures up the sights and sounds of the sleazy backstreets and the peculiarly schizophrenic atmosphere of his humanist grammar school which provided the recalcitrant teenager with a surprisingly safe haven while the great Catholic city succumbed to the virus of Nazi ideology. What comes over insistently is the closeness of Böll's immediate family, a stubborn conspiracy of affection pitted against the baleful energies unleashed by totalitarianism. Only within its protective framework, Böll indicates, could the vulnerable individual survive and develop – and only then if the family evolved an almost Schwejkian strategy to keep the régime at bay. The family allergy to Nazism, it is true, occasionally resulted in a "paralysing pessimism", but their robust and eccentric Catholicism, a mixture of faith, gentle humanism and plain common sense, brought them through in the end.

Leila Vennewitz has produced an accomplished translation: fluent and unobtrusive, it neatly captures the relaxed, conversational tone of the original. If she cannot convey the full menace and characteristic linguistic dishonesty of Nazi terminology, this is hardly her fault. Certain aspects of the German nightmare are simply untranslatable.

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Memoirs of Several Ladies of Great Britain
Edited by Ruth Perry
486pp. Detroit: Wayne State University Press. $30.
0814317472

Steering pretty directly towards *Private Eye*'s dump for "loony feminist nonsense", Simon Shepherd opens *The Women's Sharp Revenge* with the declaration:

> I am a male editor of some female pamphlets, a man muscling in on what women have made. I am aware of the argument that someone needed to bring this writing to light sooner rather than later, but in this patriarchal society I am a man in a controlling position and thus perpetuate part of that society.

This flattering over-estimate of the responsibilities of editorship is followed by a confession of "heresy with the text". In defiance of "the trend in modern editing" and in order to make the pamphlets "more readable now", the editor has, he says, modernized spelling, "neatened" punctuation, given English translations of Latin and, "with one exception", suppressed Greek. The exception turns out, however, to be given not in Greek but in Greek rendered in the English alphabet. The editor's boldest stroke is to risk a charge of condescension by finishing his foreword with the cheery salute, "To Maureen Bell for alerting me to the importance of printers, thanks with love".

The valedictory cadence does not signal that these are the editor's final words. The core of the volume represents five pamphlets, the earliest of which first appeared in 1589 and the latest in 1640. To reach them except by skipping you must penetrate, besides the foreword, a long collective introduction, two extracts from a homily and one from a legal book of the period, which together "act", according to the editor, as though he had not discharged the duty himself already, "as a preface", and then the "more specific introductory note" at the beginning of each pamphlet and the essay on pamphleteering between two of them. The editorial husk is completed by a glossary at the end of each and a collective endpiece to them all.

Towards the end of his collective introduction the editor undermines his confession of muscling in on what women have made. There is no certainty that women "made" any of the pamphlets. Each appeared either under a patent pseudonym, such as "Constantia Munda", which the editor translates as "Moral Constancy", or under a woman's name that may disguise the authorship of a man. The first pamphleteer is Jane or Joan (the forms being interchangeable at the time): Anger. On the grounds that recorded persons of that name existed at the right period in four English counties, the editor thinks but is not sure that she is genuine. He adduces her puns on the surname ("my choleric vein") and her "'we women' manner" ("our silly sex"), yet the first might equally argue for a pseudonym and the second for a man passing himself off. The editor insists that "Rachel Speght" was "real", since that was the belief of another of the pamphleteers – who, however, is pseudonymous and comes under editorial suspicion of maleness.

To his first four the editor is indulgent: "*If* they are men, they are men making a positively helpful contribution to the defence of women." Equal treatment of himself would, presumably, have prevented him from beginning with an act of contrition. His fifth pamphleteer, however, the editor believes to be a writer named John Taylor who adopted a female persona to "answer" two anti-women pamphlets of his own composition. For this the editor not only canes but truncates him. The text of his pamphlet is broken off, with the editorial explanation that it would be "a waste of time" to reprint it in full and that it is "proper" in such a volume "to cut short a man's attempt spuriously to insert his presence".

This creates notable oddities. The volume claims to present "five women's pamphlets" but in fact presents four and a bit, of which the bit is held by the editor to be certainly by a man and the others may be. Here the front of the jacket and the blurb on its flap are at variance. The front speaks of five pamphlets "all, with one intriguing exception, written by women in an age more usually considered to have been dominated by men". This the blurb partly amends. The pamphlets become "apparently written by women" and the age dominated "by male writers". Yet even the blurb attributes the pamphlets to "a time when women were thought of as weak-headed and fragile", which seems a curious way of thinking of Elizabeth I. Most oddly of all, it is the fifth pamphlet, truncated and convicted of being by a man, whose title is co-opted as the title of the volume as a whole.

Wrangles about the comparative worth of the sexes, translated by the editor into jargon as "gender controversy", date back at least to the mythical dispute between Zeus and Hera on which Teiresias, as the only qualified person, was called in to adjudicate. It is no surprise if, as Simon Shepherd convincingly maintains, Elizabethan and Jacobean printers, performing many of the functions that now belong to publishers ("thanks with love"), sought to whack up business by engineering more or less factitious exchanges of pamphlets on the old and proven theme. One such exchange, as he documents, spilled over into the theatre. However, the pamphleteers represented here could disguise everything about themselves except that they were hacks. Their prose is quite without the grace and vigour of Lodge's *Rosalynde* of 1590, a much more deserving candidate for reissue "sooner rather then later" and one whose feminist overtones are confined to its seminal relation to the delicate sex-swapping of *As You Like It*. The argumentation of the pamphleteers represented here is swollen with classical, scriptural and formally logical allusion, by which they perhaps hoped to hide the non-susceptibility of the dispute to reason. They argue on the lines of "Anything you can do I can do better" without the wit, verve or tune. They are seldom more pointed than the question that John Taylor, if it was he, asks in defence of women, whether "ever any women were such monsters as Nero, Heliogabalus, Caligula . . ." . The list runs to thirty-seven names.

Thirty-four of those the editor annotates. He is a little patchy on what needs annotation for "modern readers". "Cuckold" I should have thought accessible and "mingle-mangle" not too hard to guess. Annotating "Tyburn tiffany" as "hangman's noose", he explains Tyburn but not tiffany. Some of his own statements demand a gloze. "For the medieval religious world, the child-bearing capacity of woman was essentially that which made her physically more base than the man – man did not experience the grubbiness of menstruation or labour pains." In which "world", however, does he? This triumph for the couvade should be more widely known.

The jargon to which the editor is chiefly addicted is that of the feminism of the last two decades: "man" and "woman" where idiom requires plurals, "shared consciousness of womanhood", "imprisoned by patriarchal discourse". Still, he does not disdain other jargons: "We need to be able to deconstruct that sound and fury." Happily, that comes to nothing much. There is not a meta-text in sight – unless the whole volume is a submerged parable about publishing.

English-uttering publishers seem at present eager to produce wares with, or with the appearance of, a feminist content. It is a flurry of the kind that follows a noted success in any genre. It was preceded by a flurry towards children's books and is still accompanied by one towards cookery books. It probably argues little about feminism but demonstrates the old rule about capitalist entrepreneurism: the establishment and success of a sweet shop in a given street will suggest to capitalists not that there might now be an opening there for a greengrocer's but that it would be wise to set up a second sweet shop next to the first. Feminism may lack allure for individual book-buyers, but the posse of jackboot feminists can no doubt be counted on to bully institutions.

Protest and Reform, printed in the United States, associates itself with writings by women, but its account of the ingestion of proletarian subject-matter into fiction in English naturally ingests work by men, too, including William Paley, whose place in literature was assured when Shaw made "Paley's Watch" a sub-heading in the Preface to *Back to Methuselah*. In a different decade the book's subtitle would probably have linked it to socialism. The text marks itself as academic by citing "the literature" as readily as the literature that is its theme and by a use of words radically different from a literary artist's. Instead of leaving an image to sink into the reader's mind's eye, it will leave nothing unsaid. A typhus epidemic in the 1830s cannot be allowed to make its own point; it "caused distress". Rioting "evinced dissatisfaction". This subfusc with moments of bathos is relieved by eccentricity. *Castle Rackrent* is likened to "classical theatre, with the Rackrents being the bragging *alazons* of Roman comedy, Thady the clever *eiron*". Innocents should put away the Latin dictionary, transpose into Greek characters (the *os* represent not omicron but omega) and try the lexicon.

To segregate women in a reference book of their own is offensive to egalitarians, the more so when the women are writers. The republic of letters has had citizens *m* and *f*, admiring and influencing each other without barrier, since the seventh century BC. Advocates of apartheid may not get much practical joy from the *Dictionary of British and American Women Writers* now on offer, which seems to have and will probably give more than the usual trouble with its start and finish lines, 1660 and 1800. Knowing her to be born in 1775, you might seek Jane Austen. You would not find an entry for her and would be lucky to chance on the explanation in the long prefatory matter: "Jane Austen, who wrote in the 1790s but did not at that time put her work in final form, is eliminated." (She *ought* to have missed the deadline by only three years, since she sold a novel in 1803, but the publisher sat on it and she bought the rights back twelve years later.) Yet suppose you were trying to look her up in order to find when she put her works into final form? This one access to court the danger that attends reference books as a genre, that you may need to possess the information you want them to give you before you can tell if they can. *The Quotable Woman*, though segregated, is less offensive, because its catchment area is wider and its pretensions fewer. It is a fat, pop compendium from the United States of snippets: Sappho, whom history has reduced to snippets anyway, and Murasaki in translation, and Aphra Behn in her native and magnificent English. Under the pseudonym Mary Tattlewell you find a snatch of the pamphlet Simon Shepherd titles is by John Taylor. It gives you a glimpse of the spelling and punctuation un-neatened. Goodness knows what anyone is meant to *do* with these snippets. Surely Firbank's *Vainglory* has demonstrated the social perils of fragments of Sappho? *Memoirs of Several Ladies* proves, when you have scraped off some clumsy feminist cake decoration, to be a respectable edition of George Ballard's collection, of 1752, of what facts he could find about learned female Britons, starting with Julian of Norwich. No thrill, it is a decent example of the eighteenth-century ardour for curio-hunting that was the protonic form of so many disciplines and sciences.

The most elegant, ingenious, imaginative and imagination-respecting of feminist gestures was made in 1897 by Samuel Butler under the title *The Authoress of the Odyssey*. In order to provide material for his argument to spin, Butler had to maintain that Nausicaa was a self-portrait. Accidentally he thereby made his female Homer something of a self-portrait of his own. He was one of the excellent novelists whose talent runs largely, as Proust's one almost wholly, to transmogrifying autobiographical material into fiction. Yet there are, as too many too earnest feminists forget, authors of fiction whose imagination is fired by what they have not experienced, Shakespeare who create *Romeo and Juliet* out of not visiting Verona and *Antony and Cleopatra* out of never setting eyes on the Nile. I apprehend Homer's creativity to be Shakespearean in cast, and my intuitive assent would be given to *The Authoress of the Iliad*.

Financial affiances

Michael Crawford

ELIZABETH M. CRAIK (Editor)
Marriage and Property
192pp. Aberdeen University Press. £14.
0080284485

Not for these authors the flippancy of supposing that marriage is simply a form of friendship recognized by the police; their theme rather is the tension between affection and the thoughtful disposition of property. They pursue it in separate compartments, despite the fact that the work originated as a lecture series and generated a seminar *en route*. Even within the Western European tradition, to which the book is limited, there are yawning gaps; nothing for instance on the fusion of Roman and German customs in the early Middle Ages. The principal justification for a volume such as this must surely be that the authors show us how looking at an institution like marriage across periods *helps*. But they hardly cite each other and show no evidence of having learnt from each other. At the very least, a simple question to her classical colleagues should have prevented Barbara Crawford from asserting in the course of her treatment of Norse society that "in a tribal society fertility cults are always central to religious belief". The three legal contributions seem particularly cut off from the rest of the volume. (Doubts about whether lawyers have a sense of humour, in medieval Scotland or now, are distinctly enhanced by the way in which the story about Lady Margaret Lindsay and Lord John Bethaven is narrated.) I shall be hesitant about sending students to the French Revolution, where the role given to the views of Restif seems to me very artificial. Or to Ann Kettle on wills in later medieval England, where we are often given *in vacuo* the part relating to a man's wife, but not the rest of his dispositions. I shall, on the other hand, encourage students to read Jill Harries on what the Roman aristocracy did when confronted with a religion where wealth was supposed not to matter; also Phillip Mallett on Victorian society and A. S. Gratwick on the age of Cicero. His brisk account of Cicero's "parenting" of his daughter should put paid to the view that in Roman society women exercised power through the influence they had on their fathers.

Writing of Women: Essays in a renaissance by Phyllis Rose (160pp. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press. $14.95. 0819[illegible] 5131 7) reprints a selection of reviews and critical pieces written between 1979 and 1984. The collection is organized in two groups: essays about biographies of women writers and essays about the work of women writers. The former comprises pieces on Willa Cather, Frida Kahlo, Djuna Barnes, Anne Thackeray Ritchie, Isak Dinesen, Christina Rossetti, Helen Bannerman, Alma Mahler, Diane Arbus and "Fact and Fiction in Autobiography"; the latter, critiques of Virginia Woolf, Colette, Jean Rhys, Margaret Drabble, Emily Eden, Miles Franklin, Cynthia Ozick and Joyce Carol Oates, Simone de Beauvoir and an essay entitled "The Case of Willa Cather". The author notes in her introduction that each group develops the themes of the literary revolution of women writers and of the relationship between fact and fiction. "I would like, my essays", she writes, "to be seen as little cannonballs in an assault on an older way of seeing literary history."

Secret homages

Mario Vargas Llosa

EDWIN WILLIAMSON
The Half-Way House of Fiction: "Don Quixote" and Arthurian romance
264pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £22.50.
0198157843

Don Quixote set the seal of disapproval on the romances of chivalry from which they have never recovered. The blame for this lies not with Cervantes but with those exegetes and commentators on his novel who decided that its greatest merit was to have killed off a whole literary genre. When *Don Quixote* appeared, the romance of chivalry was already in decline; it had become monotonous and stereotyped and had lost its audience. Cervantes's obvious mockery of its narrative exaggerations and stylistic intricacies had a certain justification. But the chivalresque tradition also contained a fair number of works rich in imagination and daring in structure which, if Cervantes's commentators were right, also seemed to have been interred in noble confusion, beneath the gravestone he set up over the genre.

When I was studying literature at university, in the mid-1950s, my teachers were immovably prejudiced against the romances of chivalry. The specialist on the Spanish Golden Age dismissed them in a single lecture, repeating against them all the accusations made by Menéndez y Pelayo in his massive *Historia de la novela*: that they were clumsy, stilted, nonsensical, indecent, chaotic. I am grateful to the spirit of contradiction within me for having driven me to the library to find out for myself whether the devil were as black as he had been painted. Thus it was that I had the good fortune to read one of the greatest novels ever written: Joanot Martorell's *Tirant lo Blanc*. It is mentioned twice in *Don Quixote*, once to be called "the best book in the world", though the other allusion is somewhat derogatory. There can be no doubt but that Cervantes knew of this Valencian masterpiece, nor that he had also read, and profitably, many other examples of the genre which, as he confesses in the prologue to Part One of his novel, he was looking to ridicule.

The enthusiasm that *Tirant lo Blanc* fired in me turned me during my university days into a hardened reader of the romances. They did not addle my brains, as they did Don Quixote's, but they did provide me, as they provided him, with an abundance of illusion and of pleasure. It was not easy to lay one's hands on copies of them; of the majority there was no available edition, and the ones there were were ghastly, with tiny print or on transparent paper, which threatened the heroic reader with blindness. To find them one had to go to libraries. The freezing halls of the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid had a splendid collection and despite the cold I spent many memorable afternoons there absorbed in the labyrinthine adventures of Amadís, Esplandián, Luisarte, Palmerín and other knights-errant. To my astonishment, some of the romances, such as *Lancelot*, had been confined by Franco's punctilious censors to the Library's restricted shelves, because of certain textual indelicacies. To read them one needed authorization from the Church.

I drew two conclusions from all this reading. First, that a grave injustice had been done to a literary genre of great powers of invention and originality, which produced not only a consumer literature, for the conventional tastes of a readership hungry for action, for unsullied love and wonderful happenings, but also genuinely creative works, which laid down the basis for a narrative art to which are indebted forms as dissimilar as the Romantic novel, the nineteenth-century adventure serial and even Hollywood westerns. The second conclusion was that, contrary to his own claims and to the sermons of so many university lecturers, Cervantes had not "killed off" the romance of chivalry in *Don Quixote* but paid it a superb homage, taking what was best in it – its mythology, its rituals, its characters and its values – and adapting them for his own time in the only way possible: ironically. *Don Quixote* is the romance of chivalry for an age without knights, when reality allowed of no illusions that there might be a knightly order in the world, yet when, nevertheless, the impossible ideal still survived, having taken refuge behind its ultimate defences, of nostalgia and madness.

In his book on Don Quixote and the Arthurian tradition, Edwin Williamson adopts the perspective best suited to studying the relations between Cervantes's novel and the chivalresque tradition. He assumes that there is no radical antagonism between the two but a dialectical symbiosis: by pretending to contradict it Cervantes in fact enriched that tradition and gave back to it the vitality it had lost, at the same time as laying the foundations for a new art of narrative. (Just to make things as confusing as possible the genre he inaugurated was to be known as "realism".) Williamson restricts his analysis of the romances of chivalry to Chrétien de Troyes and *Amadis of Gaul* (along with its sequel, *The Exploits of Esplandián*). He justifies this hiatus of several centuries by stating that his intention is not to make a minute examination of Cervantes's chivalresque sources, but broadly to compare them with the novel from both the moral and the literary point of view. Given which, the texts he has chosen will no doubt suffice. But his interesting book would certainly have been strengthened if he had included other chivalresque works whose contribution to Cervantes's novel remains to be investigated. I am thinking especially of *Tirant lo Blanc* – mentioned only briefly by Williamson – which is in a way a bridge between the "naïve" outlook of the Arthurian tradition and the ironic realism of Cervantes. In *Tirant*, heroic idealism and the unrealities of courtly love are still present but put into perspective by shafts of humour and, above all, by the book's eroticism.

Williamson produces solid arguments to counter the prejudice which sees the Arthurian romance as simple "escapist" literature, and shows, on the contrary, that it portrays a serious, coherent and, at times, profound vision of the world. He makes a plausible attempt to define the notion of "truth" in medieval and Renaissance fiction: a crucial question – how much credit can be given to the novelist's version of life? – which each age and school of fiction sees in different terms, and which has given rise to countless equivocations. One of these consists in believing that Cervantes introduced the "truth" into a genre that before his time had done nothing but tell falsehoods. The realism of *Don Quixote* denounced the unreality of the Arthurian romance. This ingenuous but widespread belief sees the criterion of a fiction's veracity as lying in the similarity of the story to the reality verifiable by the reader from his own experience. Thus only "realist" fictions can tell the truth, the others tell lies.

But the fact, obviously, is that all fiction tells lies, if we compare what it recounts with lived experience; or rather the truths that it tells are not literal but indirect or symbolical ones, whose closeness or remoteness from the reality that has inspired them is of no account. Fiction gives us substitute reality, faked in words, whose essential truth is its deceptiveness and which persuades us as we read, by artificial means, that this written reality is life being lived, a real experience in the making.

Williamson argues that for the medieval mind, steeped in Platonism and accustomed to interpreting the visible world as the sign or manifestation of a secret order created by God, the ritualistic and Manichaean universe of the fictions of Chrétien de Troyes would have seemed neither exaggerated nor unreal. On the contrary: it described the true spiritual reality concealed beneath the chaos with which human perfidy and turpitude had cloaked it in everyday life. Literature's mission was to bring this hidden reality into the light so that mankind might feel itself redeemed and secure. Fiction proved to them that the real life was not the one they endured from day to day but the

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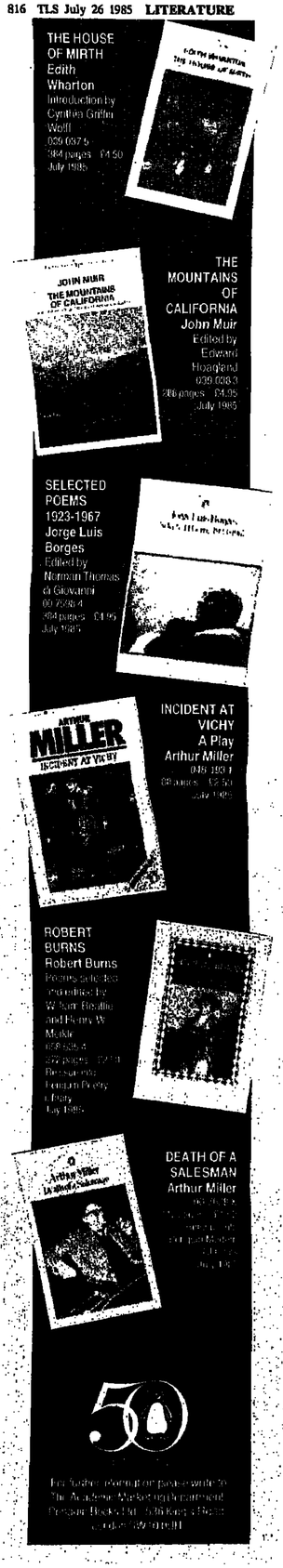

other, underlying one, a life in which evil was always put to flight by good, in which human goodness or wickedness was reflected in the beauty or ugliness of people's faces and the strength or weakness of their arms, and in which the wonderful and miraculous coexisted with the banal and trivial.

The reality which medieval man wanted to find represented in books was not the violent and fearful one he had experienced in his own flesh, but the one in which he believed so ardently: the reality of the Bible, of the catechism and of his faith; and the genius of Chrétien de Troyes lay in translating this amorphous feeling into faces, bodies, names, landscapes, adventures and the music of words. Real life was false, fiction was sure. Williamson finds the subtle term of "didactic alibi" for this operation, whereby the author of chivalresque fictions gained the credence of his readers (or listeners, since the romances could be read aloud or recited from memory) by his fabulations.

When Cervantes wrote, the social and cultural context was very different. Religion still wielded a right of veto over the literary imagination, but the latter could no longer base itself on religious truths in order to convince. Readers read more and more through the eyes of reason and less and less through those of faith. The conventions of the traditional epic romance had become artificial and nonsensical for a public which, unlike its predecessors, *asked that books should provide them with a* key to understanding the world they lived in instead of removing them from it. Readers' habits had changed. Of the four levels on which medieval men had read – the literal, the allegorical, the moral and the anagogical – the first now became pre-eminent, thanks to the rationalism of the Renaissance, and narrative fiction had to change its nature in consequence. Thus was "realism" born.

The best pages of Williamson's book unravel in great detail the sense in which the term "realism" needs to be taken when it is applied to *Don Quixote*. It does not of course denote a total promiscuity between fiction and reality but certain literary conventions, of plot, temporal structure and use of language, different from those of the chivalresque romance. With Cervantes the novel becomes exclusively literary. As Williamson says, he "situates the fiction squarely in the realm of the human imagination without mention of divine inspiration", so freeing it from "other branches of knowledge and other departments of truth, especially the truths of religion".

But at the same time he manages to preserve the matter and values of the chivalresque tradition to which the times were allergic. His subterfuge is brilliant for being as simple as it is effective. Cervantes makes Don Quixote, the defender of the chivalresque ethic and vision of the world, a madman, and contrasts him with the sane and realistic Sancho Panza, who is entrusted, as Williamson puts it, with "a rude democratization", on the basis of "bad faith, duplicity and ironic vigour", of the heroic ideals of the knight errant.

I am entirely of Williamson's opinion that Don Quixote's madness was not conceived of as a metaphor – as one school of critics insists, *for whom good literature has to be edifying* – but as a literary device for gaining acceptance and credibility for attitudes and sentiments which, but for the alibi of madness, Cervantes's contemporaries would have rejected as eccentric. Cloaked now in his insanity (by which they also acquire humorous connotations) Don Quixote's designs and code of conduct are tainted with "realism" and qualify for that assent from readers which guarantees a fiction its permanence (or which decrees its death).

The splendid paradox is that, with time, and as Cervantes's novel put down roots and began to nourish the whole of Western culture, what had been nothing more (but also nothing less) than a literary stratagem, became charged with a symbolism so powerful that today it seems impossible to relense Don Quixote from it without denling him a mortal blow. The Knight of the Rueful Countenance's insistence on seeing giants where there are windmills and systematically rejecting the laws of reality, for all the defeats, frustrations and unhappiness it brings, has come to represent a supreme form of humanity. His madness has been turned into idealism. The Don personifies the spirit of generosity fighting against the sordidness of the real world, against the meanness of common sense and against the calculating realism embodied by Sancho Panza who, inversely, has been turned into the symbol of spiritual vulgarity, conformism and cowardice.

Four hundred years after it appeared, Cervantes's book is now taken by the world to be a formidable plea in favour of illusion and against the respect men show to reality, which is surely just what the novels of chivalry, albeit in less estimable prose and through rather clumsier narratives, were doing also? Williamson's book helps us to appreciate the truth, that Cervantes, instead of dealing a death-blow to the genre of chivalry, crowned it with an extraordinary novel which was, among other things, a posthumous victory for the narrative tradition that had begun in the villages and courts of Brittany.

Up to date in hell

Cecil Grayson

TOM PHILLIPS (Translator and Illustrator)
Dante's Inferno: The first part of the "Divine Comedy" of Dante Alighieri
311pp, with 138 colour illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £25.
0500013624

The *Divine Comedy* has attracted illustrators since its first "publication", from early illuminated manuscripts through Renaissance artists like Botticelli to the powerful representations of Blake and Doré. From the start Dante's visual imagination and remarkable descriptive talents positively invited artists to transfer episodes of his narrative, most particularly from the dramatic scenes of *Inferno*, from the verbal to the figurative medium. This kind of transference has dominated the tradition, the artist reconstructing and translating into line and colour the figures and actions depicted in words, *on the principle of "ut poesis pictura"*.

Tom Phillips does not conform to this tradition. At one point he writes: "Every new illustrator has somehow to exorcise the ghost of Gustave Doré." He has done so with a vengeance, on several occasions literally cutting up pieces of Doré to form parts of his numerous "collages". Doré is far from being alone in suffering this indignity in the service of the illustrated *Inferno*, which has a great deal more to do with the artist and the contemporary world than with Dante and his text – which with few exceptions merely provides the starting-point for the creation of complex, often enigmatic and symbolical fantasies.

It is true that the passions, vices, ambitions, illusions and so on which Dante represents in his mainly contemporary medieval figures, are timeless, and relevant to our own society. But to project his poem out of context and into the alien terms of our world looks potentially like an offence rather than a service. It would be a valid excuse if this kind of projection helped us to understand the poem better; and this indeed must be the artist's intention, since the 138 prints (four for each canto plus two, others), interspersed among his own new English version, are called "a visual commentary", and are provided with explanatory notes at the end of the volume.

Take Canto XXI-XXII as an example: certainly a comic but grim and frightening episode among the "barattieri" in Maleboige, which the artist has chosen to illustrate with bits of film, comic-strip cartoons, cut-outs from Blake and Superman comics, and extracts from *Combat* magazine. He describes his XXI/3 illustration as follows:

> Cinematic as ever in his direction of the action Dante's presentation here of diabolical buffoonery reminded me of a broad-bottomed two-reeler farce. At the top of the (singed) film-strip Dante and Virgil occupy the first frame in a debased guise: Dante as he appears on the current label of a bottle of olive oil (*Olio Dante* . . .) and Virgil as he appears on the excellent Virgilio butter . . . The lower two frames show Laurel and Hardy in the same relationship as the poets, making a Stan of Dante and an Olly of Virgil . . .

There is no reason whatever why the artist should not feel free to express visually his own personal reactions to a text, and so create something which might have artistic value in its own right, which this example, together with so many others in this book, regrettably does not have. *It is quite another matter to pretend that* it tells us something about Dante. As a composition this instance is characteristic of a great part of these illustrations, which employ a wide variety of ready-made material: King Kong, aerial photographs of Los Angeles freeways, sea-side picture postcards, Picasso, Blake, Van Gogh, South African banknotes, fashion magazines, Tarot cards, Michelangelo, anatomical drawings, advertisements for Marlboro cigarettes, *Illustrated London News*, the Turin shroud, and especially *The Boy's Own Magazine*. These are often used with great ingenuity and skill, yet it would be difficult to claim that the majority succeed either independently as art or dependently as illustrations of the *Comedy*. Other prints are less patent, and have all the basic qualities of the rebus, built out of letters, slogans, signs, arrows, "No Entry" plates, flags, rope, hessian, keys, and so on. This kind of illustration in particular discourages description of this volume as a coffee-table book, though one might envisage an entertaining evening with guests guessing the meanings of the pictures and looking up the answers at the back.

Where, apart from this general process of "up-dating" *Inferno*, the illustrations miss the mark as interpretative commentary can be exemplified by Phillips's pictures for Canto V and related notes. There is no evidence for his assertion that "Dante himself, certainly in his earlier years, was known to be a philanderer", and little justification for throwing (partly in consequence of this belief) a predominantly sexual light on Paolo and Francesca by the use of film stills of two people in coital positions (V/1 and V/4). The interpretation of this canto has been and still is much discussed by scholars: one thing is certain, that it is not explicable in terms of conjunction.

Phillips spent seven years preparing the illustrations. He has also put a great deal of time and effort into his entirely new version in blank verse, which is certainly very easily readable and straightforward without recourse to "poetic" or archaic language. Difficult lines are ably rendered with some sacrifice of strict accuracy ("my best foot ever forward, planted firm" skirts the problems of "il piè fermo sempre era'l più basso"; "that friend of mine, who is not fortune's friend", sounds literally correct for "l'amico mio e non de la ventura", but is not what Beatrice means), and here and there the tone drops to a too colloquial level; *but on the* whole this modern rendering has much to commend it for its rhythm and readily accessible language, and can bear comparison on these grounds with other recent translations of more patently academic origin.

The volume is well produced and free from misprints, though there is some misplacement of plates (X/4 and XII/4, and XXIV/2 and 3 have been interchanged), and the prints have possibly lost some colour-tone in the process of reduction from their original size, in which they first appeared in de luxe form in 1983. It is a handsome but ambiguous book: a kind of forced marriage between art and literature, medieval and modern, which does not quite come off.

Dante Comparisons: Comparative studies of Dante and Montale, Foscolo, Tasso, Chaucer, Petrarch, Propertius and Catullus, edited by Eric Haywood and Barry Jones (154pp. Irish Academic Press, £17.50, 0 7165 2362 0) has recently been published. It consists of a collection of essays which are based on lectures given at University College Dublin as part of the annual Dante series. The essays include "Dante, and Montale: The Threads of Influence" by Zygmunt Barański, "Catullus, Propertius and the *Vita nuova*" by Thomas Finan and "Dante, Chaucer and the Meaning of Love" by Gerald Morgan.

In the official grip

Douglas Wass

EZRA N. SULEIMAN (Editor)
Bureaucrats and Policy Making: A comparative overview
292pp. Holmes and Meier. $37.50 (paperback, $16.95).
EDWARD C. PAGE
Political Authority and Bureaucratic Power: A comparative analysis
188pp. Wheatsheaf Books; distributed by Harvester, Brighton. £18.95.
0 7108 0211 0

The definitive work on the role and functions of the bureaucracy is Max Weber's *Economy and Society*, first published in 1922. His conception of the bureaucratic model was that it should be technocratic, disciplined and permanent; it should be well trained; and its role ought to be the execution and administration of policy, not its formulation. The articles assembled in Ezra Suleiman's *Bureaucracy and Policy Making* describe the civil service in eight different countries and afford not only an empirical test of Weber's assertions but a valuable comparative study of how bureaucratic power operates in environments with varying political and cultural traditions.

If there is a shortcoming in the collection it is simply that its authors are all academics with little direct experience of how the government process functions and how officials operate. They all draw heavily on published material, and support their arguments with survey and statistical analysis. But to the reader who has actually inhabited the goldfish bowl, it is all too apparent how visually distorting to the outsider the glass actually is. The fish are there all right, swimming, eating and breeding. But why they do what they do is not obvious to the observer. And anyway the bowl is only partly open to inspection. As Weber recognized, bureaucracies operate in an opaque medium and it is not easy to establish exactly what they are doing and what motivates them.

But, with this single deficiency, the articles make compulsive reading and, by describing the practices in countries as different as West Germany and Chile, they identify what is perhaps intrinsic to present-day bureaucracy. The authors agree as to how wrong Weber was to postulate the separation of the functions of officials and politicians. In all countries, the senior civil service plays a major role in formulating policy; even with support from party colleagues, ministers can do little except approve or reject advice and recommendations put to them. They may give a steer to their bureaucrats, but they have neither the time nor the practical experience to do more. The dilemma which this circumstance poses is how ministers can be assured that their policy advisers are fully committed to their aims and objectives. This question lies at the heart of the current debate about the politicization of our own civil service.

Bureaucracy and Policy Making shows how exceptional, indeed out-of-step, the British are in preserving the apoliticality of their officials. All the other countries have come to terms, more or less, with the political involvement of their top bureaucrats. The Americans of course have the most "political" of the higher civil services, all their bureau chiefs and agency heads being presidential appointees and liable to lose their jobs with any change of administration. But the French with their *cabinets*, and the Germans with their *politische Beamte*, have in effect ensured that the route to the top of their services requires explicit political endorsement. And if ever the Liberal Democratic Party falls from power in Japan, it is clear that many officials' heads will roll. When Neil Kinnock announces his intention to review certain civil service appointments if he becomes prime minister, he is only echoing what Louis Mermaz, one of President Mitterrand's friends, said in 1981 when the Socialists were elected in France. There is much food for thought here – for those who want to see change and for those who do not.

But what also distinguishes most of the bureaucracies examined from our own is how the political involvement of senior officials has been accompanied by the movement of civil servants into the formal political arena. Members of the *grands corps* are not obliged to resign their appointments when they stand for the National Assembly. Indeed, over 10 per cent of the deputies elected in 1978 were from the élite grades of the *corps*. The same is true in Germany, where, in the Bundestag of 1976–80, over 30 per cent of the members were civil servants. In Japan, 20 per cent of post-war cabinet ministers were ex-civil servants and a quarter of the ruling party's candidates were former officials.

In all these countries, the grip of officials on the political process and upon policy-making is very powerful – far more so than in Britain. The morale of the bureaucracy is high, as is its prestige (as indeed Weber said it should be). It is overtly élitist and highly privileged – Suleiman graphically brings out how Mitterrand was forced to come to terms with the *grands corps*. Only in Italy is the bureaucracy as withdrawn from politics – and as demoralized – as is our own. There it has retired into its private shell, trading security of tenure for its withdrawal from an active and dynamic role in policy-making. If British politicians want to be instructed in the perils of humiliating the civil service they should take a sabbatical in Rome. Italian officials remain adept at obstructing measures they do not like; but for the rest, "weak and outflanked, accustomed to be on the defensive", they take refuge in legalism.

The studies are instructive, however, not *just for what they tell us about the big constitu*tional questions which the bureaucracies of the modern state pose. They illuminate a number of other areas where interest has been acute, particularly in Britain. What is the role of training? Are generalists to be preferred to specialists? What is the value of interchange between the civil service and the private sector? How important is secrecy to the functioning of government? Here a number of myths are exploded. The generalist predominates in all the civil services – both in the élitist, high-morale *cadres* like the French and the Japanese, and in the others like the Italian. The specialist is largely confined to his specialism, as he is in Great Britain. If there is one discipline which is favoured in most civil services, it is the law. But the studies suggest that this influence is on balance baleful rather than the reverse. Training, both on the job and on courses, is important everywhere. But the reader is left with the feeling that French training in the manner of the *grandes écoles* is absurdly overdone, and is intended to sift and screen the candidates in some intellectual pecking order rather than to produce effective and responsive officials. Everywhere it is asserted that officials love secrecy, for, as Weber argued, secrecy is power and bureaucracies cherish their power. This is where the goldfish bowl becomes distorting. My own experience tells me that the assumption that officials love secrecy is false. It is the politicians who are jealous of the power that knowledge confers. The authors should note that the British civil service has embraced the cause of freedom of information.

E. C. Page's *Political Authority and Bureaucratic Power* is a more theoretical and, inevitably, a less valuable work than Suleiman's. It examines the relationship of officials to the various organs of the political process, including the courts. It is a useful introduction to the subject, but highly derivative, containing little that is new. The ghost of Weber stalks altogether too dominantly through its pages.

Francesco Guardi's drawing "The Corte del Ridotto", reproduced from Drawings from Venice: Masterworks from the Museo Correr, Venice *by Terisio Pignatti and Giandomenico Romanelli (160pp. Trefoil. £12.95. 0 86294 066 4).*

Shifting solidarities

Nigel Clive

G. R. BERRIDGE and A. JENNINGS (Editors)
Diplomacy at the UN
227pp. Macmillan. £25.
0333360192

This collection of essays by fifteen different contributors, mostly academics but some with practical experience of service in or accreditation to the United Nations, originated in a series of lectures given at the University of Leicester three years ago. As so often in such cases when separate lectures later form the substance of a book, the result is marked by a degree of overlap and unevenness of quality. Sensibly divided into three parts reflecting the different forms of diplomacy available at the United Nations – third party, multilateral and bilateral – the essays that have best stood the test of time, in commenting on a rapidly changing scene, come from Peter Calvocoressi on the Security Council, Anthony Parsons on the UN and International Security and Susan Strange on the Poverty of Multilateral Economic Diplomacy.

During the past forty years, the number of those in and outside government who have admired the performance of the United Nations has progressively decreased. This is scarcely surprising when hopes were raised so unrealistically high at and after the Conference at San Francisco in 1945, which prepared the original UN Charter. The conventional wisdom of that time was that the UN would profit from the proven mistakes and failures of the League of Nations and free the post-war world from the threat of a third conflagration. Little did the founding fathers know that the past was no guide to what lay ahead. When, for instance, it is remembered that J. C. Smuts, as Prime Minister of a then respected South Africa, was personally involved in the preparation of the first draft of the preamble of the UN Charter; that UN membership in 1945 did not even include Sweden; that the basic premise of the Charter's security structure was that the main threat to peace would be from a resurgent Germany and Japan; that Israel did not then exist – these facts alone prompt the realization that the speed and magnitude of radical change in the world during the last forty years has been greater than in any previous century. It can hardly be held against the founding fathers that they failed to foresee either the Cold War or the continuous process of decolonization, which had raised the membership of the UN from fifty-one to 158 in 1985, with the consequent domination of the General Assembly since the 1960s by the developing countries of the Third World. In fact, this concept of a *Third World would have been meaningless to* any of the participants at the San Francisco Conference. It is one of the merits of this book that it does not try to disguise the problems of operating an international organization in a world so sharply divided by East–West as well as North–South conflicts, while at the same time balancing the record of certain failures with some of the successes of UN diplomacy.

Since the veto has prevented the Security Council from being more than an instrument of persuasion, rather than of coercion (as was originally intended), it is necessarily in the realm of unsettled disputes, notably in the Middle East, that its peace-keeping missions have most evidently proved their worth. Moreover, the continued invocation of Resolution 242 of 1967 and 338 of 1973 is further evidence of its active role. The value of freezing a dispute when a solution is unattainable should not be underrated. If the super-powers have consistently considered their mutual relations as their own business and have learned how to shun the Council's authority, this does not mean that either of them has disregarded the open forum of the General Assembly, whose affairs are governed by the loosely organized grouping of Third World countries, who can normally put together the required two-thirds majority for resolutions on any issue they choose. Here again, the Assembly's power is only persuasive not coercive. It could hardly be otherwise when the Maldive Islands have the same voting strength as a super-power. Especially when the Assembly is in session, New York has also proved to be convenient terrain for discreet contacts between missions of hostile states. But the two best proofs of the value of UN membership are that South Africa, despite a string of Assembly resolutions thundering against apartheid, has stayed inside the UN, in order to deny this privilege to the African National Congress, and that Israel, which has received every kind of criticism, including a resolution equating Zionism with racism, has gone to significant *lengths not to leave the UN. These points are* well brought out in the chapters on bilateral diplomacy.

In contrast to the legitimate trademark of interdependence covering the market economies of the twenty-four member countries of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Susan Strange does well to point up the asymmetry of interdependence in the Third World. Here the Group of Seventy-Seven has only nominal sovereignty when it has to depend on the developed world for credit, technology and markets for its agriculture and industry. But even so, protracted negotiations on such issues as the Multi-Fibre Agreement (MFA) have given G77 the opportunity to demonstrate their solidarity as a group. Indeed, the role of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in helping exporters from the Third World to make astonishing inroads into the markets of industrialized countries during the last decade, is far from common knowledge.

Finally, it would have been an improvement if comments on Dag Hammarskjöld had made the point that he was the only Secretary-General to combine political acumen with economic expertise, and if Kurt Waldheim's role had been described in terms nearer the opposite of "self-effacing".

In undaunted defence

Christopher Hope

NANCY HARRISON
Winnie Mandela: Mother of a nation
181pp. Gollancz. £8.95.
0 575 03657 5
ELLEN KUZWAYO
Call Me Woman
266pp. Women's Press. Paperback, £5.95.
0 704 39366

In 1958 Nelson Mandela, the moving force behind the African National Congress, married a young medical social worker, Winnie Madikizela, and moved into a small house in Soweto, the black township outside Johannesburg. Six years later Mrs Winnie Mandela heard her husband sentenced to life imprisonment. In his memorable and powerful speech from the dock, Mandela condemned the Nationalist régime, among other things, for its policy of banishing scores of people "to remote parts of the country". These words were prophetic. Thirteen years later Winnie Mandela was woken in the early hours of the morning by the police, who took her to the police station, presented her with a banishment order and drove her immediately to a black location that lies outside the town of Brandfort, in the desolate heart of the Orange Free State.

Winnie Mandela has had to withstand very many blows and doubtless she will survive Nancy Harrison's adulatory account of her life. Nevertheless one cannot but feel this was a chance missed. The ANC in general and Nelson Mandela in particular retain the loyalty of the majority of black South Africans. Mrs Mandela could be described as the most important woman in South Africa, and deserves to be widely known. Regrettably, this excitable account leads one to suspect that biography is among the arts of concealment.

Harrison begins with Winnie's childhood in Pondoland, the daughter of Methodist parents, devout, stern and ambitious. She follows the girl's move to Johannesburg in the mid-1950s, where she was to become the first black medical social worker. She showed early signs of academic brilliance, was a noted beauty and, barely out of her teens, married Nelson Mandela, a practising lawyer and already, as far as the government was concerned, a marked man. Nancy Harrison appears to have been swept away by the romance of it all: the pretty young social worker, the brave, worldly, handsome lawyer, courtship and marriage, a wicked government which haunts their lives . . . . Of the age difference between them (Mandela was almost twenty years older than his wife), Harrison coyly allows: "his feelings for Winnie were not exactly those of a father!"

When Nelson Mandela was led away to begin his life sentence, his wife was left with two small daughters and an uncertain future. In breaking the leadership of the African National Congress and driving the survivors abroad, or underground, the authorities delivered a near fatal blow to radical opposition. But if they imagined that Mandela's young wife would disappear from view, then they will have come to rue the degree of their miscalculation. Banned, detained, imprisoned and banished, Winnie Mandela has remained a symbol of all that the government in South Africa fears and distrusts and through her efforts the Mandela name has redoubled its potency.

Go to Soweto today and the chances are that someone will point out to you the empty house of Winnie Mandela, which is one of the landmarks of the township. From time to time there is to be seen parked outside the house a red van with Brandfort number-plates. When Winnie Mandela was taken by the police from this house in 1977 it was an act of desperation, almost a gesture of despair. By transplanting her to the heartland of white Afrikaner nationalists, the authorities must have thought they were positioning a fragment of meat above a tank of piranha. They must have thought further that by banishing her to a wretchedly poor, demoralized African location she would be seen by the people there as a burden and a political liability. Harrison's account of the banishment is the one solid achievement in the book and she is particularly good on the way in which the arrival of Winnie Mandela in this Free State town has, in the deepest sense of the word, revolutionized attitudes among both whites and blacks. On the long separation from her husband, Harrison is less secure. Telling of the infrequent visits over the years to the gaol on Robben Island, and, more recently, to the prison in Cape Town to which Mandela has been transferred, she is alternately dewy-eyed and defiant, cheering the heroine and hissing the villain. She has been curiously reluctant to accumulate other opinions of Winnie Mandela from family, friends, colleagues, allies and adversaries. This is a less than adequate portrait of a remarkable woman.

Nothing and no one stands between the reader and Ellen Kuzwayo. The style of her autobiography is blunt, often wayward and confusing, yet always eloquent. There are resemblances between her and Winnie Mandela. Both were mission-educated, both were children of aspiring, devout Christian parents; both learnt the hard way that tolerance and charity were not be looked for in South African government policies; both ventured from rural areas to Johannesburg in difficult circumstances and survived and even prospered against the odds. Both are formidable Sowetans. *Call Me Woman* is a record from that journey, a lively, shrewd, painful account of Ellen Kuzwayo's growing self-awareness and of the genius of her people.

Mrs Kuzwayo is one of a vanishing breed. Her family were once part of an African élite, solid folk, law-abiding Christians who in the days prior to the Nationalist victory of 1948 imagined that although life was difficult in South Africa, there was a place for them, that it was possible, at least in certain selected areas, to communicate with the white government on a human level. The family owned their own farm and were settled, rooted, respectable property-owners. Her stepfather took the *Government Gazette* and the *Farmers' Weekly*. Such families must have felt they had widening horizons. Then came the crusading racialism we call apartheid, and the horizons closed in. Ellen Kuzwayo's family lost their farm when the government declared the area to be "white"; they lost their deeply rooted sense of place and purpose and they began to realize that under the new régime there were no "special" blacks.

Mrs Kuzwayo has in every sense remade herself. She endured the loss of the family farm, walked out on a bad marriage, and has been both a schoolteacher and a social worker. She played a "Skokiaan Queen" in the film of *Cry, the Beloved Country*; and became General Secretary of the YWCA. Her political awareness was sharpened and toughened by the 1976 uprising; she has dispensed motherly advice to black radicals such as Steve Biko; members of her family have been banned and she herself has been in prison without trial for her connection with the Black Consciousness Movement as well as her protective zeal for the well-being of all the people of Soweto. Today she is President of the Black Consumers' Union.

Her autobiography is quirky, breathless, haphazard, witty and deeply appealing. She can be almost comically mater-of-fact, as in her description of the dangers of the illicit brews – including *skokiaan* – of the township: "The victims of mbamba soon developed swollen feet and end up with distended abdomens. More often than not, after that stage, they do not live long."

Mrs Kuzwayo's identification with the people of Soweto is complete. Whether she is initiating sewing circles, or pit latrines, or upbraiding the Minister of Police for his treatment of black detainees, she is unquenchable. In *Call Me Woman* she provides a delightful self-portrait characterized by restless benevolence and undaunted humanity.

Not to be dictated to

Bona Malwal

MANSOUR KHALID
Nimeiri and the Revolution of Dis-May
409pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £15.
0 710301111

No one is better qualified than Mansour Khalid to write an account of the Nimeiri era in the history of modern Sudan. Dr Khalid, who already had a distinguished background as an academic and international civil servant, joined Nimeiri's cabinet as Minister of Youth in 1970. He was one of Nimeiri's closest confidants and he became one of the most powerful members of his government in the better days of his administration; before it gradually degenerated into the most repressive and corrupt régime of recent times in Sudan. Herein lie both his special knowledge and the authority with which he writes this account.

Nimeiri and the Revolution of Dis-May is a compelling work, although not without bitterness. Khalid was driven into exile both by the repugnance he felt for Nimeiri's actions and by threats to his life and his personal liberty. Afraid of how much the author knew, Nimeiri had secretly ordered his arrest if he ever returned to the Sudan. Wisely, Khalid did not visit his country in the last two years in which he was working on his book, since he already had all his facts and documents with him. But the value of this work must be judged not merely by the timely contribution it makes to the opposition which has culminated in Nimeiri's downfall by its exposure of how worried dictators are about their international image. Nimeiri was no exception to the rule. Cruel and vindictive at home, he tried to present an image of himself to the world as an irreplaceable survivor whose authority was beyond question; and who was free of corruption. *The Revolution of Dis-May* had already exploded that myth even before its publication, when its Arabic version began serialization in *El Qabath* in Kuwait. The wound inflicted by the series was deep and the damage irreversible, both at home and abroad. Nimeiri intervened, through diplomatic channels, and the series was discontinued after its twentieth instalment; the only reasonably free press of the region thus became a victim of Nimeiri's dictatorship. That act, together with what was already contained in the twenty articles of the series, had exposed enough of Nimeiri's hitherto unknown misdeeds as well of his weaknesses of personality.

As Minister of Foreign Affairs and one of the longest-serving senior members of the régime, Khalid had been mainly involved with matters of public policy, but he also had access to classified and secret information. In *Nimeiri and the Revolution of Dis-May* he rightly takes credit for attempting, with others, to shape Sudan as a modern state, to be based on the institutionalization of procedure and decision-making. A strong presidential system in a culturally diverse society tends to be much influenced by the image of its first president and in fact Sudan was moulded in the image of a president whose characters his policy-makers were later to question. As a soldier dictator, Nimeiri stayed in the background, sometimes appearing to take little interest in the idea of power concentrated in the hands of one man but, at the same time, subtly subverting every constitutional attempt that his civilian advisers made to create an institutionalized system of government. He used the presidential powers soberly and sparingly only in the early 1970s.

Khalid shares with a few others the credit of guiding Nimeiri, in the earlier years of his régime, to such achievements as the solution to the Southern Sudan problem. He was a participant in the 1972 agreement which ended the seventeen-year civil war between the south and the central government and which offered the country not only a period of prosperity, but also a chance for national unity. He was one of many around Nimeiri who used that agreement internationally to the best effect in the interest of his country, presenting it as an example to the Third World of the peaceful resolution of internal conflicts. Subsequently, he saw Nimeiri abrogate that agreement and plunge the country into another civil war. This is just one among several of the author's disappointing experiences with the "multi-personality" of Nimeiri.

The book presents informative detail about the corruption and illegal dealings of Nimeiri's later years. The question often raised by outsiders has been how people like Khalid could have known all about such matters and yet stayed on for so long; and why they did not speak up when they were in power, when such criticism would have seemed legitimate. But as the author repeatedly points out, there are two main problems: first, that Nimeiri seemed to call upon individuals in the name of national duty, a challenge many educated and capable nationalists always found difficult to refuse; second, speaking up as an insider is not the same as speaking up as an outsider. As an insider, there are certain moral and institutional rules and obligations to observe. Criticisms of certain actions are not acts of opposition, but Nimeiri regarded any criticism as an act of treason. He never forgave those who criticized him or tried to stop him from taking a wrong decision or action. Many people stayed on to try to prevent greater damage being done to the state by leaving only corrupt and weak individuals around a leader who was himself becoming increasingly despotic and corrupt. The decision to opt out was not always an act of gallantry or patriotism on the part of those few who eventually took it. It was more a desperate act to save oneself from becoming trapped in the web of corruption.

The nightmare endured by the Sudanese people lasted for nearly sixteen years. Nimeiri was gradually spoiled, not only by the people around him, but by his own greed for power and wealth and his fear of losing them. With no family other than his wife, and no confidence in long-term human relationships except as part of his power game, he came to rely on power and money and used them to some effect for a time. But he also came to believe so much in the rightness of his own tactics that he lost any sense of the reality of the world around him. The incredible international deals into which he entered, up until his last days, many of which Khalid recounts and documents quite extensively, show how far Nimeiri was prepared to go to maintain his power. In the words of one distinguished African expert: "He seemed to be prepared to consider all manner of wildly unrealistic multi-billion dollar projects with foreign firms. The picture one gets from these transactions is that, so far as Nimeiri was concerned, the resources of the Sudan were up for grabs to high bidding foreign entrepreneurs."

Afraid of the loss of power and wealth, Nimeiri was later driven into mad actions. The imposition of Sharia (Islamic) law on the country and the cruelty with which its punishments were carried out are only proof of Nimeiri's own fright and his belief that he could hang on to power by crude force. His inherent brutality, which the author eloquently portrays, became more pronounced as his isolation from the people he once thought loved him increasingly demonstrated that they all hated him.

There are many who will judge Khalid's book as an effort towards his own self-vindication. While there is some truth in that, readers should also find it a well-documented history of his own time. In either case, posterity must find that it was right to speak out forcefully, frankly and courageously against a tyrannical dictator.

Africa Review 1985 (352pp. Saffron Walden: World of Information. Paperback, £25. 0 904439 45 3) contains business information in over 300 pages on fifty-one African countries, including up-to-date maps and names – Burkina Faso, Malawi – advertisements and illustrations, preceded by seven analytical articles. Contributors include Basil Davidson, Suzanne Cronje, Kaye Whiteman, John Kane-Berman and several anonymous specialists.

A mirage of mum

David Leitch

POLLY TOYNBEE
Lost Children: The story of adopted children searching for their mothers
199p. Hutchinson. £10.95.
0 09 160440 0

During her research for this in some ways controversial study of adoption since the passing of the 1975 Children's Act, Polly Toynbee interviewed over forty adults who have been adopted and who are seeking or have found their natural parents. From among them she then chose eight subjects and now gives us their case histories which, she says, were the most "typical" – a word which takes one aback when confronted by the sadness as well as the compelling strangeness of these "lost children's" lives. The stories are all highly dramatic, encompassing moments of joyful reunion as well as the most chilling disappointments, not least for the only man in Ms Toynbee's sample. With one exception, the searchers place an excessive, sometimes infuriating, weight on "genetic" links. They are all unsceptical, faithful to their childhood fantasies of a mother whom they would one day find, believing that a biological mother whom they have encountered only briefly in a past beyond memory is somehow more real (and more loving) than the familiar adoptive mother who has brought them up.

Only one of Toynbee's subjects, Georgina, daughter of the notorious Ruth Ellis, is described by her real name. Her story contains as shattering a collection of facts about a parent as any child could ever expect to confront. Georgina (who, exceptionally in these histories, does not believe in genetic inheritance) is generally out of step with the other searchers. Yet the woeful account of her upbringing, and the discovery that her mother was the last woman to be hanged for murder in Britain, underlines the cautionary point which is made less melodramatically in the other case histories – Mum or Dad may turn out to be a monster.

"Colette", a twenty-three-year-old community nurse, discovers that her mother is a derelict alcoholic; "Cherry", a twenty-five-year-old married woman, places a small ad in a North London paper and acquires overnight a set of disturbed, quarrelsome siblings who sponge cigarettes off her. But perhaps the most illuminating collision of fantasy and reality is the meeting between "Dorothy", a retired teacher, whose daughter, "Caroline", was conceived after a drunken night at a Mediterranean festa, an event where she "lost every shred of decency and dignity as a human being". After the 1975 Children's Act Dorothy is terrified that she will be found, yet it is her own confused initiative that brings her together with her daughter. "Caroline" has fantasized that her mother will be either "a Joan Collins vamp or an Irish waif" and, as is usual in Toynbee's subjects' dreams, there is some truth – "Dorothy" is, in fact, Irish. When they meet, "Caroline" is entranced by a sense of physical recognition – mother and daughter are struck by each other's "long faces and beautiful feet", their mutual love of cats and, though on an unacknowledged level, a mutual taste for the bottle. But after the reunion comes the problem of sustaining a relationship between two people who have little in common except blood ties. To "Caroline", mum becomes boring. To "Dorothy" her daughter is "a kind of mirage, a simulation of a child she once had. There is nothing on which to build a relationship . . . . It has been a little like losing her child all over again." The account is a tribute to the author's skill as an interviewer, though Toynbee was less successful with "Mrs Barnes", "Caroline"'s affluent adoptive mother – "adopters", as they are unattractively called, get noticeably less sympathy than "adoptees" throughout the book.

Toynbee's favourite metaphor, of an orphan as an "alien lamb" foisted in a new skin on to a mother ewe who would not accept it "without the deception", is not sensitively chosen, but it has a certain crude force. And one understands its appositeness when one reads about "Mark and Greta", a young couple who have spent five years with their names on the waiting-list of a Catholic adoption society. Every year 20,000 couples compete for one of 2,000 "healthy white babies under 12 months" annually available for adoption in Britain. After some equivocal counselling "Mark" and "Greta" are assigned "Wayne", soon to be transmogrified into "Michael". They then try to put their own stamp on the child, and simultaneously to obliterate links with his past which, in adult life, he might seek as a sign-post to a lost identity. "Greta" is counselled to adopt a kind of self-deception as well as the child – while on the waiting-list, she is advised to pretend that she is pregnant and to imagine that she has suffered a miscarriage if application is turned down. If for some reason the adoption "doesn't take" or the natural mother changes her mind within the three-month trial period then she is to consider "Wayne/Michael" as a cot death.

Although the 1975 Children's Act was designed to make adoption openly and publicly acknowledged it is still regarded, Ms Toynbee suggests, "as a kind of unconscious deception. The adopters are the ewes who might reject the child" unless allowed to pretend it is really their own. She suggests that a remedy for this might be "open adoption" or "custodianship", systems in which contact with the natural parents is maintained, but she is less persuasive as an advocate than she has been as a reporter. It is as if her objectivity and rationality are suddenly out of place in the secret, ambivalent and intensely emotional terrain she has so skilfully portrayed.

Moments of Being, edited with an introduction and notes by Jeanne Schulkind (230pp. Hogarth Press. £12.95. 0 7012 0616 0) is a collection of Virginia Woolf's autobiographical writing, much of it drawn from memories of childhood and adolescence. This second edition (the first was published in 1976) contains twenty-seven pages of entirely new material.

A detail from a photograph in Milton Rogovin's The Forgotten Ones *(183pp. University of Washington Press. $35, paperback $19.95. 0295 961961).*

Straying affections

Peter Clarke

LADY OLWEN CAREY EVANS
Lloyd George Was My Father: The autobiography of Lady Carey Evans as told to Mary Garner
173pp. Llandysul: Gomer. £5.75.
0 86383 112 5

Lady Olwen Carey Evans is the only surviving child of David and Margaret Lloyd George. When she was born in 1892, her father had been MP for Carnarvon Boroughs for a mere two years. She makes it clear in this charming memoir how wistfully the family regretted the peremptory summons to London. "Life, certainly for Mother and the children, would have been absolutely perfect if we could have spent all our days at Criccieth." This is essentially a postlapsarian account of the first family of Wales. It has none of the bitterness of Richard Lloyd George's book on his father which created such a stir twenty-five years ago. The author's long-standing recognition that the serpent had entered the garden is, none the less, apparent from her pages. The relationship between her parents is inevitably a focus of interest, and here she sets into a sane perspective a story which has lent itself to sensationalism ever since her brother's revelations.

That Lloyd George felt a deep and lifelong attachment to Margaret, his wife for over fifty years, is a fact too readily overlooked nowadays. True, he was not faithful to her and lived flagrantly with his mistress for more than half the time. Despite all this, the marriage never really broke down and it may come as a surprise how often he was to be found in the house at Criccieth which Margaret maintained in later years and which is still in a sense his home. It was she who kept the Carnarvon Boroughs seat warm for him in his absences and he never contested it without her at his side, choosing to take his earldom after her death instead.

As for the young Olwen, an outspoken child, she evidently sensed that her father's affections sometimes strayed. There is a nice story of him showing the children a gift from his wife and teasing them by saying, "It was given to me by a lovely lady – guess who?" The nine-year-old girl asked, "Was it Mrs Timothy Davies?" and a provoking silence told the rest. It was Frances Stevenson, a decade later, who more permanently appropriated Lloyd George, becoming his "darling Pussy" and living with him at his other house at Churt during the inter-war years. This became a stable triangular relationship for which bigamy seems an appropriate term.

It can hardly be expected that Lady Olwen would depict Frances in a very favourable light. "To talk to she seemed meek and mild, but underneath she was as hard as nails." The family's reluctance to acknowledge her child as a natural half-sister is reaffirmed. But the tone is not vindictive and there is a recognition that Pussy did not have all the cream. "Frances had to wait on him like a servant, as I am sure she had to most of the time they were together, for Father was always one of the most demanding of men."

This comment, of course, says much about Lloyd George himself – a man who had been spoiled as a child and took it for granted that his family was there to indulge him. His brother William, left in charge of the indigent MP's law practice, is given belated acknowledgement. If Lloyd George had simple tastes, it was, especially in later years, because he simply demanded the best. The photographs in this volume reinforce the image of a man; dressed fastidiously if often informally, who was pampered in his private life.

The author candidly admits that "in some ways Father was like a God to me, particularly in political matters", and this is hardly the place to look for a searching critique of his career. Yet it throws light into some unexpected corners and displays a firm grasp upon context and chronology. One anecdote is told of Sir William Harcourt instead of his son Loulou but such slips are rare. These memoirs are "as told to Mary Garner", a journalist working in Criccieth, and she has done a real service in recording so faithfully the fascinating story which Lady Olwen has to tell.

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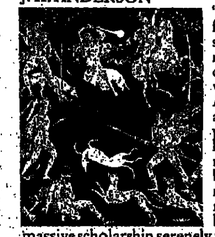

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Posing people

Celina Fox

HUGO VICKERS
Cecil Beaton: The authorized biography
656pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £16.95.
0 297 78405 6

Cecil Beaton was an entirely self-made man and in later years he occasionally stood back from himself and regarded his achievements with a certain satisfaction. After a party he had given at the Café Royal in 1958, he wrote in his diary, "The list was star-studded. Perhaps it represented a lifetime of social climbing. Anyway on paper it looked very impressive to me." But his goals were not those usually associated with bootstrap pulling. Although he was shrewd about money, it simply provided him with the means to attain the standard of living to which he aspired. He was intermittently serious about his *métier*, but the principal driving force, particularly in his early years, appears to have been a passionate desire for fame. He had the narcissism of an actor, a desire to be centre-stage and a lifelong addiction to the theatre which, as it was largely frustrated, caused him to seek other means of self-expression.

Relying heavily on 145 volumes of Beaton's diaries, Hugo Vickers has plodded dutifully in his subject's wake. Beaton was brought up in the comfortable surroundings of middle-class Hampstead, and he adored the elaborate hats, the swishing skirts, the feathers, bows and parasols of his Edwardian childhood; he was to recreate them later in his most effective stage designs. At Harrow and Cambridge, he was never happier than when dressed up to play a woman's part on stage. Harold Acton reviewed his appearance, in the ADC's production of Pirandello's *Henry IV* in 1924, as the Marchesa Matilda, exuding "a Coty-perfumed atmosphere of Roman-Venetian society as we read of it in the novels of Ouida and Marion Crawford".

Three stages of Cecil Beaton's retouching of a photographic portrait, with his working notes on stage two; they are reproduced from the book reviewed here.

It is unclear how this "ghastly little tick" – as Beaton described himself, looking back – with no money or connections, little education and only a modest talent, infiltrated the fashionable world, and Vickers does not venture far enough from his subject to speculate. One moment Beaton is being "treated like dirt" on the outside, envying such luminaries as Lady Diana Cooper and Lord Berners talking at the tops of their voices on a steamer to the Lido. A few pages later, he has been accepted and is designing for and participating in the best parties. Certainly his photography provided the passport; good manners and charm helped. In the aftermath of the First World War, the upper classes were more than usually in need of jesters to distract them and Beaton possibly represented as much style and artiness as most of them could manage. They would not contemplate buying a Matisse or a de Chirico, but it was amusing to be photographed against a vaguely fauve backcloth or inside a glass dome, at least for the young and *outré*. For the rest, he could conjure up family portraits and conversation pieces in the ancestral mould, with backgrounds of colonnaded parkland prospects or rich interiors of gilt and brocade. The labyrinthine network of social connection ensured that eventually his efforts with vapid débutantes would lead him to Ruritanian royalty. The photographs in the book are tellingly chosen. A sequence (see above) illustrates three stages in the retouching of a hapless dowager, who is thinned down to an impossible degree. Two pages further on, the surprisingly wasp-waisted Queen Mother poses cocooned in a haze of spangled net within a Fragonard-style bower.

Yet Beaton, it transpires, never felt quite at ease with the aristocracy. And, as a young man he felt an outsider because of his homosexuality. Even allowing for the difficulty in discerning where an Englishman stops and a homosexual begins, it is quite puzzling to see why he felt so much of "a felon and an outcast", given the company he kept. But evidently until he was well into his twenties, he was quite naive about such matters. His whole appearance was conspicuously effeminate, yet he hated "fairies" collectively; they frightened and nauseated him, and he saw himself "vividly shadowed" in many of them. Vickers gives details of a number of satisfactory affairs that Beaton had with both men and women. But when he fell in love, he chose highly unsuitable targets. Peter Watson and Greta Garbo were more selfish than he was, capable of maddeningly elusive behaviour which caused him considerable pain. Looking back, he felt that he had not inspired real love at all, "a very pitiable lacuna, and that is the awful realization I must face".

With the years, he gained somewhat in *gravitas*, considering himself to be a late developer learning from earlier mistakes. He was dismissed from American *Vogue* in 1938 for a stupid lapse in taste (his frivolous border drawn for an article on New York Society contained the sentence, "Mr R. Andrew's Ball at the El Morocco brought out all the damned kikes in town") and returned to England, according to the *Vogue* fashion editor, Madge Garland, "a serious man". About this time he said he was "sick to death of posing people round apple blossom". But his career as a war photographer was never on the front line and his approach relied more on calculated technique than emotional involvement. He was capable too of some extremely fatuous sentiments: "It is the genius of the Queen that has caused the Palace to be bombed so that the East Enders should not feel they are alone in their misery. What a *wonderful* person that Queen is, just by being so nice and so good."

Beaton was always aware of his own superficiality and that his success had only been achieved through hard work and driving ambition. In 1953, he enrolled as a student at the Slade in an effort to produce something more than stylish doodles, but the experience only made him more conscious of his own inadequacy, "the difference between the work I have been doing and that which it will be necessary to do if I am to succeed by serious standards". Nevertheless, increasingly he was asked to design for theatrical and film productions, a field in which he made his love-affair with the Edwardian era go a very long way. Vickers traces the stages in this development from Frederick Ashton ballets before the war to *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Second Mrs Tanqueray*, which added a much needed taste of glamorous extravagance to austerity London. It is as the designer of *Gigi* and *My Fair Lady* that he is probably best remembered. Vickers recounts the trials that Beaton suffered in their making, but is simply content to quote reviews rather than assessing his special contribution to the genre.

Vickers sees him as veering more towards artistic circles without providing much evidence to support this hypothesis. Frequently, the artistic and socially chic went hand in hand but Beaton always seemed most thrilled by his social conquests. He had a special affinity with royal ladies, but was less impressed by their husbands. He counted as "another milestone – the biggest yet perhaps in my social rise" the acceptance by the Queen Mother of a luncheon invitation at his house in Pelham Place. He rose from his sick-bed to have lunch with Princess Margaret: "It was perhaps the first cold I have cured by snobbery." But he never got on with Prince Philip and found Antony Armstrong-Jones "extremely nondescript, biscuit-complexioned, ratty and untidy". In the case of the latter, his judgment was warped by professional jealousy and the fact that Armstrong-Jones was the nephew of his much more versatile and original rival in the theatre and ballet world, Oliver Messel.

The pace of Beaton's social life during the 1960s earned him the nickname "Rip-Van-With-It" from Cyril Connolly and even his hitherto indefatigable biographer begins to flag. When Beaton receives his knighthood, Vickers is content to print in a list the most prestigious and least banal telegrams. Indeed, throughout this lengthy book, he includes names for the sake of dropping them. He has certainly interviewed many people who knew Beaton, but their comments too frequently read like the transcript of a reverential television obituary on a Hollywood star; his linking prose does little more than stick the material together in chronological order. It offers no perspective and often reveals a sense of history culled from women's weeklies. Before the Abdication crisis we are told, "Presently Cecil was catapulted into the middle of the most enduringly fascinating drama of the century". He seems unable to spot whoppers whether coming directly from friends or filtered through Beaton's diaries. Of the Hepburn family we learn that during the war, "They had almost starved in their London flat in South Audley Street, which explained why Audrey was so thin." Even the 1960s acquire an aura of unreality with Christopher Gibbs introduced as "perhaps the most articulate survivor of those mercurial times".

Vickers concludes with vacuous hyperbole: Here was a man who by exploring and nurturing every talent he possessed (and even a few he did not) had acquired an insight (and not only a visual one) into the fundamental issues that have preoccupied great artists through many ages.

Whatever this insight was, it is not revealed in the book. *Cecil Beaton: The authorized biography* lacks the critical apparatus even to place Beaton in context as a photographer, designer, writer or social figure, let alone provide fundamental insights. Most unforgivably, one suspects for those who knew him, it lacks the polish and the lightness of touch of which at least Beaton was a master.

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Remainders

Eric Korn

The book-fair swarm has come, coruscated briefly in the summer sky, and like the Leonids (Orionids? Phasmids? Caryatids? Instinctual ids?) has gone, leaving the gloom Stygianer than before. What can I tell you about it? There was the person who looked at the one-volume, India-paper, flame-resistant, easy-tearing *Lord of the Rings*, and asked "Isn't there another volume, *Lord of the Flies*?" There were persons who expressed a broad interest in late-Victorian folk-literature, but in fact just yearned for the little red story-book that they used to be read to out of from in the bath. And then there was the man who comprehensively squashed me, thus: "Have you any Peter Pan books?" "No." "Any Shakespeare at all?" "No." "Then have you any edition whatever of *Gone with the Wind*?" "No, but let me congratulate you on an exceptionally well-balanced wants-list." "Oh, I could go on, but there doesn't seem to be much point, does there?"

* * *

A piece I wrote about a conference on Humor brought me a ton of mail (I do love getting letters, please don't stop), from which I learn that Dale Lowdermilk, founder of NOT-SAFE, "the world's most sarcastic organization", has a serious purpose. He's against over-regulation of people: gun-laws, seat-belt laws, stringent safety rules. He's also an Air Traffic Controller. I don't think that's funny at all.

* * *

There's no longer any possible doubt: the friends of INTERPAL are after me, led by Otto Evil, Live Otto Evil that is. Their mysterious graffiti ("Radar Boob!", "Dud Nun", "Sanatas e morte: retro me, Satanas") appear on hoardings around me, scrawled in the dust of Tube-train windows, muttered over the intercoms of taxis I do not recall hailing. And by every post, it seems, I get notification of more and more outlandish achievements. Every time I say I'm going off palindromes, there is a universal shout of Oho or Aha or Heiotobotoleh. First there came, anonymously and by a circuitous path, a play script. Only about eighty words of actual speech, but pages of stage directions, justification and critical apparatus. The truly dreadful thing about palindromes is that you know how they are going to end: "In my beginning is my end" as T. Eliot, top poet, did not mean to say in *Not Ron, T. N. Rub*. So the moment the curtains rise and a character called THEOLOGIAN observes "Drat such a stressed dog!", you know, with a profound and horrible surety, that sooner or later, after several pages of tense dialectic ("Sin is Bad" remarks the theologian), with entropic ineluctibility, someone is going to say "God! Desserts . . . ah, custard . . ." as the curtain falls.

Then there came a brief billet-doux from a man in Philadelphia with a natty line in Hebrew Word-Squares ("the bee found in the honey must be set afire and burnt", unusually lucid for the genre), and then a letter from a person signing as Tohu W. Bohu, which I have reason to believe is an assumed name. Ms Bohu is, alas, one of an increasing number of correspondents I cannot correspond with, as they follow the North American etiquette of only giving the address on the envelope, and I follow the British custom of opening my mail at the breakfast table and throwing the envelopes away with the kipperskins and fermenting marmalade. As I also follow the British custom of then doing nothing about my mail for at least a week, the address is by then trash-compacted or recycled. T. W. Bohu quotes at length from Page's *Further Greek Epigrams*, telling me fascinating stuff about the palindromic epigrams of Nicodemus of Heraclea, the isopsephic ones of Leonides of Alexandria, and the lipogramic *Iliad* of Nestor of Laranda, composed so that Book 1 is alpha-less, Book 2 beta-free, Book 3 gamma-deficient, Book 4 has zero delta-content and so on. The cream of the jest, the cream of the nut of the jest, the jest nut cream, is that the Greek for one, two, three and four, is alpha, beta, gamma, delta; so Book Gamma is agammic, Book Delta is disdelta'ed, Book Epsilon is Epsilon Minus (after Epsilon it gets too complicated to go into).

Because each Greek letter has a numerical value, you can, if you are crazy enough, add up all the values of all the letters in each line: isopsephics are so constructed that each distich of a quatrain has the same value, which is what Leonides ("it is customary to spell his name incorrectly" observes Page, no slouch at epigrams himself) spent his time doing in Alexandria. Because of corruption, entropy and the passage of time (none of which excuses Geffcken, an earlier authority, for his "bad mistakes and shocking errors of judgment"), the sums don't actually work out in the versions that have been handed down to us, though the maths can usually be made impeccable by fiddling with the spelling. (But not in A.P.6.322 where "the problem is so difficult that a suggestion of Stadtmuller may be pondered less impatiently than it would otherwise seem to deserve".) To make things easy on himself, Leonides bent the rules a little; for example, "correption is allowed at the bucolic diaeresis" (which some of us, who have set our faces against correption, man and boy, these twenty yeëars – that's the bucolic diaeresis – are pretty unhappy about, I can tell you).

Worse yet are Nicodemus' protopalindromes, which simply read (and scan) forwards and backwards, word by word, instead of letter by letter, saying different things in each direction. Page is not fond of Nicodemus' works (they're strictly not palindromes, but anastrephontics or antistrephontics or anacyclics), and is particularly distressed by his use of the form *possis* for *pósis*: "particularly irresponsible and offensive ... we may perhaps go so far as to say that we should be surprised and sorry to learn that Nicodemus lived in or anywhere near the time of Leonides of Alexandria"; it's cranium-crunching stuff to try and assemble:

> Clever Nicodemus *cares*, who minds the twists and turns
> Poetic. Your Muses strike (gong-like) Heavens; good friend,
> Singing such refrain, lyric's all-sweet abandon.
>
> Abandon, sweetie[1], all lyrics. Refrain (from)[2] such singing, friend.
> Good heavens! Like, go on[3] strike, Muses! Your Poetic
> Turns and twists in the mind. Who cares, Nicodemus?
>
> Clever, *nu*?[4]

1. "A word may be elided in one direction but not in the other." (Page)
2. "Not wholly satisfactory in this context." (Ibid)
3. "In reading backwards, word-groups of certain kinds count as single words." (Ib)
4. "Paragogic *nu* may be present in one direction, absent in the other." (Ditto)

Worse was to come. Worse came. Worse was *Satire, Veritas* by David L. Stephens of North Carolina, published by Word Ways (Monograph Series 1, 1980, n.p. but California); and sent to me by the obliging David Sachs. *Satire, Veritas*, if Mr Stephens can be trusted, and who would doubt it, is a palindrome of 58,795 letters. It will be sufficient to quote from the non-palindromic, explanatory, justificatory preface:

> These lines were found on the desk of Giles Selig Hales, the young editor of an avant-garde literary journal, ready for mailing to his friend Eton Harrison. The letter purports to be a sample of manuscripts from his desk . . . some of the writers are, apparently, not quite sane, and some are assuredly, at least drunk. . . . Eva, Giles' frenetic and bibulous friend, writes obscure verse, conducts interviews with deceased (?) celebrities, and is obsessed with the idea that dogs are taking over the world . . . .

The preface also contains an indelicate medical note about the disease of *koro* or *shook young* (a curious condition of what might be described as extreme if local reticence which affects Asian males, and with which William Burroughs, Snr, has also been much preoccupied). Given all this, you will not be surprised to learn that the text begins

> Sir, I stratified a mix, I made notes, mots to Ms, Eton, Giles Selig Hales' Saga. Ecce Homo; Saib Eton, On hubris asleep . . .

No more please. Things are getting worse. Yesterday I bought a manuscript nineteenth-century jotting-book, and a slip of paper fell out: it contained a musical palindrome, an invertible canon. And I have just read the astrophysical trend-theory that the Big Bang is winding down not to the heat-death of the universe, which I was quite looking forward to, but to a superdense black hole engulfing galaxies, which will implode in one great eructation that sends time spinning backwards and the scattered atoms back to GNAB GIB. Life is a palindrome, my friend, and I, ma, am I in the middle.

* * *

I owe Sotheby's – nothing new about that, as the accounts department will be happy to confirm – I owe Sotheby's, this time, an apology. In the matter of Mayakovsky's *Voyna i Mir*, I said it was eccentric, at least, to translate "Mir" as "universe" – its other meaning – when Tolstoy's *Voyna i Mir* had established the sense for all time. But I had forgotten that Tolstoy could tell, that Mayakovsky could tell, that before 1918 anyone could tell, which meaning of *Mir* was meant. Until the post-Revolutionary reform of the alphabet, they were spelt differently. Consequently, Mayakovsky, the contemporary reader, and Sotheby's estimable Slavist all knew what they were talking about, and I was playing the role, approximately, of an ill-informed Russian ninny who – after the G.B.S. fonetik alfaebet is introduced in 1997 – pontificates ignorantly about the impossibility of distinguishing between a peace egg and a pease pudding.

* * *

I was politely reminded of all this by scholarly David Thomson of Ontario, to whom I would have been still more grateful if he had not then chosen to tell me a great quantity of *distasteful* stuff about the Surrealist poet Khlebnikov, who could recite spontaneous palindromic verse, each line, as well as the whole poem, droming palinically. Not only could, but did. I have a friend who can chew her left ear, but she has the grace not to perform in public.

Festschrift Albi Rosenthal, edited by Rudolf Elvers (319pp. Tutzing: Schneider. DM 148. 3 7952 0432 1), pays tribute to the scholarly specialist dealer in rare musical books and manuscripts who, in businesses operating from Oxford and London, has been so influential in the development of private and institutional collections throughout the world. The articles include essays on the manuscripts and bibliography of J. S. and C. P. E. Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Berlioz and Britten, and more general matter includes a long essay by Professor G. V. R. Born, "The Effect of the Scientific Environment in Britain on Refugee Scholars from German and their Effects on Science in Britain".

G.N.

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Letters

'From Time Immemorial'

Sir, – Bernard Lewis is at a loss to understand why his name has been invoked in the *From Time Immemorial* scandal (Letters, June 21). Permit me to refresh his memory.

Professor Lewis is the second individual thanked on the acknowledgements page of *From Time Immemorial*, specifically for his "extended encouragement, introductions to invaluable contacts and sources, and generous sharing of his personal archival resources". Joan Peters states that she was "especially appreciative" of his co-operation. Lewis now asserts that he afforded the author only "minor assistance . . . in the early stages of her work". I have no reason to doubt his word. But why did it take him so long to say as much publicly? Lewis knew as far back as June 1984 of the doubts about *From Time Immemorial*. I personally forwarded to him all the relevant materials. (My numerous efforts to contact him personally all proved unavailing; he never responded.) If what he now tells *TLS* readers is true, he must surely have understood that his eminent name was being used to lend the disinformation effort a veneer of respectability. Yet, for reasons best known to himself, Lewis chose to remain silent for *fully a year*.

The only "myth" I detect in this sordid affair is Joan Peters's (alleged) misrepresentation of Bernard Lewis's involvement. That this myth "spread abroad", Lewis has no one to blame but himself.

NORMAN G. FINKELSTEIN.
36 Ellwood Street, New York, New York 10040.

Development Economics

Sir, – Is it not a fact that all countries of the world, rich and poor alike, are dependent on agriculture – their own or some other country's? Where land resources and climates permit, Third World countries would generally prefer to be permanently dependent on their own agriculture rather than permanently *dependent on*, for instance, North American agriculture.

David Lehmann's objection (Letters, June 7) to "consigning the poor countries of the world to permanent dependence on agriculture" may not have been meant in this sense, but the fact that the unqualified objection could be made illustrates how development theorists confuse both themselves and Third World policy-makers by taking emotionally charged stands for and against "industrialization".

The issue should not be whether to industrialize or not, but what industries will most help a country to achieve its development goals. Where the primary aim is to provide a large and poverty-stricken rural population with adequate subsistence, and not merely to serve the interests of an élite group, those industries should be given priority which contribute to increasing agricultural yields and to providing for their distribution.

Such industries have to be paid for – which is where poor countries get trapped. Industrial exports which do not reduce the supply of subsistence materials would be preferable as a means of earning foreign exchange to the export of cash crops. This is presumably Lehmann's point.

A further confusion has to be avoided. This derives from the misunderstanding of the Industrial Revolution which Myrdal exposed. Ridiculous though it may seem, there is still a hangover from the belief that the employment opportunities offered by industrialization of any sort will somehow reduce rural population densities and even reduce the drain on rural resources. Behind this confusion lies the reluctance to face the issue of population control. Yet another myth foisted on us by development economists is that injection of capital into a rural economy will result in higher yields and higher incomes, irrespective either of factors of scale or of resource shortages. The standing example is provision of bank loans for peasants to purchase buffaloes in areas where there is insufficient fodder for the existing stock. It is also, at last, on record that Green Revolution technology is not scale-neutral, which means that millions of peasant smallholders on the level of bare subsistence cannot raise the funds either to pay for fertilizers or to service loans.

Industries which serve the consumerism of the high-income groups and their pursuit of Western styles of living tend to divert an unacceptably high proportion of the land's yields from subsistence to commerce. Where this happens, it appears that priorities are skewed. This contention is illustrated by India, the tenth most industrialized country in the world, where around 400 millions of the population are reported to be undernourished, poorly clothed, badly housed and largely illiterate. On the other side of the tracks is the world of soft drinks, fashionable clothing, private cars and air-conditioners, besides image-building Asiads and computer electronics.

There are only too many examples of men who starve their families so as to enjoy their selfish pleasures. If this is inexcusable in the individual, how much more so is it on the national level? To do it in the name of "industrial development" makes it no better. Which industries serve whose interests?

SRI MADHAVA ASHISH.
PO Mirtola, District Almora, Uttar Pradesh, India.

'And Now to My Mother'

Sir, – I was surprised by the letter from my sister, Lyndall Hopkinson (Contessa Passerini), which you published in your issue of July 12. I only hope that she soon manages to complete her own memoir of our mother, Antonia White, and look forward to reading it. I doubt if her estimate of our mother's character will differ in essence from my own.

The situation is a complicated one. Her book was commissioned (by Carmen Callil of Chatto) some while after mine. As a result she voluntarily gave up the opportunity to read and comment on the manuscript of mine – if she had read it she could have pointed out the alleged errors of detail to which she now draws attention. She and Miss Callil *did* put pressure on me to delay the publication of my book till hers was ready, something which my publisher was not willing to do. I am, however, sure that concern for my mother's reputation and nothing else has made her write to you.

SUSAN CHITTY.
Bow Cottage, West Hoathly, West Sussex.

'Doubles'

Sir, – In his review (July 5) of Karl Miller's *Doubles: Studies in literary history* David Bromwich quotes the following passage as an example of the the author's ironic didacticism: "The movie *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* conferred an American welcome on a craft from Outer Space, which was boarded by a man and woman who had united in clandestine love. The movie says that adulterers may see God, and has proved very popular."

Wittily didactic this may be, but the real irony of the situation is that, in order to make his point, Miller has wildly misremembered the plot of Steven Spielberg's film. In neither the original nor the re-edited "Special edition" version of the movie do the hero and heroine unite "in clandestine love". What *does* unite them is the way in which they both find themselves drawn, by a variety of means, towards the "secret" rendezvous place of an alien space-craft. The story does indeed chart their growing affection, but their relationship develops entirely within the context of this other-worldly obsession, and finds its only consummation in a chaste kiss – indeed, it is difficult to imagine when, in such a hectic and eventful adventure, they might have found time for a spot of adultery as well. Finally, it is only Roy Neary (played by Richard Dreyfuss) who boards the mother-ship at the end of the film, while Gillian Guiler (Melinda Dillon) stays discreetly out of sight. There is no particular suggestion that she might accompany him, the less so since she has just been re-united with her infant son ("borrowed" by the aliens earlier in the film), the recovery of whom has been the main incentive for her actions.

I can only conclude that Karl Miller cannot have watched the version of the film which was generally seen on television and cinematic release, but must have stumbled upon its slightly sleazier demonic double.

GAIL-NINA ANDERSON.
25 Bayswater Road, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne.

'Pound's Artists'

Sir, – I'm afraid there were several factual errors in the review of our exhibition *Pound's Artists*, by Humphrey Carpenter (Commentary, June 28).

First, Henri Gaudier-Brzeska's portraits of the poet are in ink, not in charcoal – this is an important distinction. The techniques are very different and Gaudier's use of the former can be seen to relate to Pound's interest in the Chinese ideogram. Second, it is rather misleading to imply that a direct connection between Epstein's "Rock Drill" and Pound's use of the same title for Cantos 85–95 exists. More correctly, the title "Rock Drill" was first used by Wyndham Lewis in a review (published in the *New Statesman*, April 1951) of D. D. Page's edition of Pound's letters. Third, the two works by Whistler are not drawings but etchings, and finally the date of the Wyndham Lewis portrait of Ezra Pound is 1939, not 1938.

I think you will agree that this is a rather high percentage of mistakes in a very short review – I suggest Mr Carpenter looks a little more closely next time.

HILARY GRESTY
Kettle's Yard, University of Cambridge, Northampton Street, Cambridge.

Tennessee Williams

Sir, – May I assure Frederic Raphael that a streetcar named Desire did indeed run in the streets of New Orleans (June 21)? Elysian Fields and Cemeteries, also mentioned for symbolic reasons in Blanche DuBois's speech "They told me to take . . . ", were (and are) actual transport destinations as well.

It is fortunate that Tennessee Williams wrote *A Streetcar Named Desire* when he did. The eponymous vehicle became a bus named Desire Florida.

FRANK GAGNARD.
Times-Picayune Publishing Corporation, 3800 Howard Avenue, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Sir, – Frederic Raphael, reviewing Donald Spoto's biography of Tennessee Williams (June 21), tells us that a library in St Louis stocked *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1926, "when no London shelves would have carried a copy". This is scarcely surprising, since the book was not published until July 1928.

JOHN BYRNE.
Bertram Rota Ltd, 30-31 Long Acre, London WC2.

Peter Clark's *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns 1600–1800*, which was reviewed by F. M. L. Thompson in our issue of March 15, is published in paperback by Hutchinson at £8.95 (0 09 154611 7).

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(173)

COMMENTARY

Gags for God

Roy Porter

PETER BARNES
Red Noses
Barbican Theatre

"It's not funny", cries Father Flote, the hero of Peter Barnes's tragi-pantomime, which is set in France at the height of the Black Death. What is not funny is, of course, the plague itself; but even less so is what it does to people through the blind, cruel desperation it induces. It throws up the Black Ravens, those who get rich off the pestilence by plundering the dead bodies. It produces the Flagellants, convinced that plague is God's way of telling man that mortification is true holiness. And it spawns a save-your-skin cynicism among the powers-that-be. For a time this even leads the Pope and King to tolerate Flote's scandalous anti-bubo charm: laughter. Foolery, it dawns on him in a divine illumination, is God's gift to mankind to destroy the plague and to free him from those other ghastly plagues that go along with it – war, pride, dominion, hate.

And so, in Farrah's powerful set, all smoke and crucifixes, and under Terry Hands's confident direction, Anthony Sher as the funster priest unfolds Barnes's version of *Everyman*. Saint, prophet, simpleton, Flote crusades against all who think evil is the answer to evil in this evil world. Gathering converts from among hard-bitten mercenaries and cynical priests who come to jeer but end up auditioning for his troupe, his mission is to melt hatred with jokes, tumbling, dance and song. Gags for God: one-liners will save the world.

And it works. The pun proves mightier than the sword. Yet the moment of triumph is also the moment of defeat. The plague lifts. But normality returns: authority creeps out of its hole, and carnage, exploitation and betrayal resume their normal service. Popes and kings no longer have to put up with Flote and his players, who are crossbowed down.

What really is no joke is the reason why Flote can now be liquidated. It is not (as he at first leads himself to believe) because the Joker as Jesus is too dangerous, too subversive. The truth, he discovers, is far more desolate than that. The authorities have been using laughter as a diversion all along. Far from being a revolutionary, perhaps the Holy Fool is merely a dupe. The laugh is on him.

I have summarized the story at length, because there is little to *Red Noses* apart from its tale. It is a tale of two moralities, a Mystery that proposes redemption by wit, an innocent force bringing the motley mummers into communion. The holiness of art, a baptism of a new life of purity – can this be real, or is it just a conceit cherished by the joker while he is being co-opted into the state of betrayal?

This is brave matter for a play, and it is staged with a rhetorical flourish. But does it work? Certainly there are occasions when the fooling of the Red Noses is infectious and their laughter catching. There is an effective theatrical moment when the world's-worst-stammerer-turned-stand-up-comic suddenly bursts into full-throated eloquence through the voice of his glove puppet. Barnes knows the powers of pathos.

Yet a black comedy devil has got into him. He plays a cruel joke on his clowns: he lumbers them with all the worst lines. Through comedy they are to regenerate the world; yet their gags would get any seaside rep hissed off the end of the pier ("I've lost my virginity. I can never remember where I left it. Lucky I've still got the box it came in"). After a couple of hours of this and some amateur slapstick, our sympathies are with the Pope and his crossbowmen. What made Mr Barnes do it? Why has he got such a soft spot for old corn? If you believe that theatre saves, and that laughter is the true miracle, you need to create mirthful magic on the stage. In its absence, the comedy becomes tiresome, the message maudlin, and a full team of bravura performances cannot gainsay the self-pronounced verdict: it's not funny.

Open door see mountain

Peter Kemp

Omnibus: The Salesman Goes to China
BBC1

Covering an impressive amount of ground – from McCarthy's America to present-day Peking – *The Salesman Goes to China* unpacked an intriguing range of novelties. Samples of differing interpretations of *Death of a Salesman*'s central figure, Willy Loman, were brought out to advertise the richness of the play's texture and its ability to stand up to the wear and tear of social change. Film of Lee J. Cobb's performance as Willy in the original 1949 production displayed an unexpectedly sleek and substantial salesman, well-tailored and well-padded. Dustin Hoffman's more recent rendering – reedy-voiced and twitchy-limbed – seemed closer to the fagged-out feverishness of the character, as Miller, praising Hoffman's "nervosity", confirmed. From Hollywood came a shabby period curiosity: made during the McCarthy era, the film scissored out references deemed unAmerican, and cut Willy down to a psychotic crazily at variance with a model society.

The most surprising slant given to the play so far, though, is that by the People's Art Theatre of Peking – whose production, directed by Miller, *Omnibus* devoted most of its time to documenting. Inventive mergings of the Eastern and Western were everywhere apparent. Willy's suit was cut from "the last piece of Western material in China" by an aged tailor whose knowledge of Western fashions stopped short at the 1940s anyway. Faced with the problem of finding an American refrigerator of the period, the company brought in an eighty-two-year-old master of *papier-mâché* work, who constructed a perfect replica, so light it could be lifted with one finger.

Meticulous matching-up was sought by the translation, too. Done by the prodigiously gifted Ying Ruocheng – who also played Willy Loman – it aimed to facilitate Miller's direction by conforming as closely as possible in length and even sentence structure to his American text. Only Chinese idioms proved picturesquely remote from the play's grey Brooklynese: "I'll put it to him straight" changed into "I will tell him open door see mountain", "I won't take the rap for this" became "I will not carry that charred cooking pot on my back".

Enthrallingly informative about Chinese theatre as well as Miller's drama, the programme watched the company striving to break free of conventions like playing directly to the audience or bearing props to the front of the stage to show them off. Also, performers had to learn how to work themselves into uncustomary modes of response. Ying Ruocheng found it difficult to play scenes where Willy only half attends to those speaking to him, since it's considered discourteous to ignore other actors on stage. Baffled by Biff's mixed reaction to his father – simultaneously berating and caring for him – a young actor eventually hit upon a helpful analogy, remembering how, in the past, he had felt conflict when forced to denounce Deng Xiao Ping in public while privately admiring him.

Politics kept moving centre stage. The programme's most gripping moments were those where actors spoke, with heroic geniality, of their experiences during the Cultural Revolution: denunciations, house arrests, forced labour, colleagues tortured and driven to suicide. Admirably unembittered by the ferocious fatuities they'd been subjected to, they smilingly recalled the compulsory descents to the basement to receive instructions on acting from the boilerman, or the way Madame Mao's dumbfounding dictat, "Spoken drama is dead", gouged away a decade of their artistic lives.

The company's willingness to tackle *Death of a Salesman* seemed further proof of their applause-worthy pluckiness. As survivors of mass hysteria and savage social coercion, they might be thought ideally placed to appreciate Miller – the great dramatizer of the struggle between individual integrity and social pressure, the untiring portrayer of the witch-hunt, the purge, the pogrom, the vengeance of the clan on deviants and dissenters. But while the concept of social oppression is one the Chinese are at home with, Ying Ruocheng observed, Miller's notion of individualism as something praiseworthy and not mere selfishness is very alien to them. Shrewdly surveying such cultural gulfs and points of contact, this absorbing programme – spanning thirty-five years and two continents – wasn't only about *Death of a Salesman*; it also provided, as it were, a view from the bridge.

Yeats's great vellum notebook

Warwick Gould

Sold at Sotheby's on July 22 for £275,000 to Colin Franklin, Yeats's vellum-bound folio manuscript book, with its 387 pages of heavily revised drafts, contains his most important manuscripts from the period from November 23, 1930, to the end of the summer of 1933, the years that culminated in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* and *Wheels and Butterflies*. Drafts of poems such as "Coole Park and Ballylee, 1931", "The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus", "The Seven Sages", "Crazy Jane talks with the Bishop" stand alongside the unpublished essay "The Death of Lady Gregory" (dated June 19, 1932), notes and revisions for *A Vision* and some later essays, the introductory essays for the *Wheels and Butterflies* plays, fragmentary lyrics such as "Youthful Innocence", corrections not published in his lifetime to poems and plays, notes on the Irish censorship and politics, notes upon Cowley's rhymes, and a lecture, "Modern Ireland".

The contents have been known in part from the work of A. Norman Jeffares, Richard Ellmann and Curtis Bradford; much, however, remains to be done. Few will know the volume's scope, as Bradford's typed checklist of contents (tipped in) lacks a final page which would have listed the contents of the volume's last pages. Drafts of "Let images of basalt, black, immovable" and "Move upon Newton's Town" are in these last pages, where "Meru" grows from a prose "theme":

> Civilization is a dream, a series of illusions, which we dissolve [sic] as we die of the truth. The ascetic frozen into [with ?] the ice berg [?] sits naked in contemplation he alone of living things possesses the truth.

Such passages are invaluable. Drafted before the essay "The Holy Mountain" and indeed a year before "Meru" itself was finished, this prose fragment is one of the synapses scholars might have laboured to re-establish in accounting for Yeats's late thinking about wisdom. Another theme is entitled "Wisdom" (the working title for "Vacillation"); the emerging poem is, however, "The Results of Thought", but "Vacillation" is worked over (in some twenty-two pages) alongside the redrafting of his Frazerian play "The Resurrection", references to *Adonis*, *Attis*, *Osiris*, and notes from Hastings's *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*. Fastidious always about "total" books, Yeats was increasingly committed to "total" manuscript volumes too, which could offer a permanent habitation to that "fibrous darkness", that "matrix out of which everything has come".

The use of bound manuscript books was established early on, as the 1893 white vellum manuscript book shows. Working with Blake's manuscripts may have convinced the young Yeats of the value of preserving rough work, and therefore of permanent form. He certainly wrote with regard for Blake's "great drawing-book" (since dismembered) of Dante designs. Curtis Bradford tells us that increasingly Yeats sought to preserve his manuscripts, but that it was chance "more than any other factor" which in fact "governed what was kept and what thrown away". Yet committal of manuscript drafts to a bound book was itself an endorsement of permanence: it offered, too, the "two-page spread", with its opportunities for revision and over-writing.

The visual impact of this palimpsest is even more arresting than accounts such as Bradford's have suggested. Redraftings expand in balloons out of cross-hatched, vigorously rejected passages, as Yeats moves backwards and forwards through the book, out and away from his early draft in quest of his poem. The hand, frequently unreadable – even to himself, and his wife – seems to have moved at great speed, its script intended less for anyone's elucidation than to "beat time" as the poet's ear listened "for the right combination" – as Jon Stallworthy has said, he was "in fact *thinking* on paper". Only eventual facsimile reproduction and transcription (as Erdman and Moore accomplished with Blake's *Notebook*) will do justice to this "exploded view" of Yeats's mind in the act of creation.

Heavenly pursuits

T. O. Treadwell

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS
Sweet Bird of Youth
Theatre Royal, Haymarket

There is something of a Tennessee Williams boom on at the moment. Recent weeks have seen an excellent production of *The Glass Menagerie* at Greenwich and the publication here of Donald Spoto's large-scale biography of the playwright, and now Harold Pinter's glossy revival of *Sweet Bird of Youth*, first staged in 1959, has arrived in the West End.

It isn't easy to see what has attracted Pinter to this particular play: probably no author in the history of world drama makes less use of the gnomic silence than Tennessee Williams, and in *Sweet Bird of Youth* he is at his most verbose. The play is crammed full of portentous themes, among them death and rebirth (the action takes place on Easter Day), fertility and sterility, innocence and corruption, the tragic passage of time, the absence of God and racial bigotry in the American South. To carry all this freight is asking a lot of any plot, and *Sweet Bird of Youth* lists badly under the load.

The play tells the story of an ageing gigolo's return to the Mississippi town where he grew up, and from which he intends to rescue the love of his innocent youth. Chance Wayne (his ostentatiously significant name is symptomatic) is accompanied by The Princess, a fading film star on the run from a disastrous comeback attempt, whom he plans to blackmail into starting him off on a Hollywood career. The town is controlled by Boss Finley, a ranting demagogue whose daughter Heavenly is Chance's beloved. Chance represents youth, potency and love and thus challenges Finley, who is identified with age, impotence and hate – but Chance's hair is thinning. His youth is gone and his innocence with it: the forces of evil are too powerful and he is destroyed.

The Princess is far more consciously in the grip of cormorant devouring Time, but she's an artist and can therefore turn the tragedy of lost youth into triumph, at least for a while, though how all this relates to Chance's doomed homecoming isn't easy to say, and the issues are further confused by the large number of other characters who wander irrelevantly through the plot.

It's all high-camp nonsense, really, but *Sweet Bird of Youth* undeniably provides a meaty, dramatically glamorous role for a middle-aged actress. Lauren Bacall's Princess has all the necessary charisma but misses the iron-hard egotism the part demands and the touch of self-mocking humour she brings to the character, though charming, is misplaced. Michael Beck effectively communicates the confusion and vulnerability beneath Chance Wayne's sexiness, and even manages to give some plausibility to his final address to the audience – a considerable achievement. Beck's performance provides the major pleasure of the evening.

Pinter's airy and brightly-lit staging gives no sense of the steamy seediness of the Mississippi gulf-coast, and so conveys none of the claustrophobic miasma essential to the effect of the piece. His production seems to have aimed principally for clarity, which may be no bad policy for a director as a general rule, but which, in the case of this exotically over-heated play, is a mistake.

Mutual champions

John Warrack

JON W. FINSON and LARRY TODD (Editors)
Mendelssohn and Schumann
189pp. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press. $32.50
0822305690

Born within seventeen months of one another and at different ends of Germany, Schumann and Mendelssohn converged on Leipzig as young men and for the decade 1835 to 1844 were responsible for giving the city a musical lustre it had not possessed since the great days of Bach's reign at St Thomas's.

Schumann was the first to arrive, in 1828. When Mendelssohn made his appearance conducting the Gewandhaus Orchestra in three of his own overtures, and amazing all beholders by doing so from a rostrum wielding a baton, Schumann was so impressed that he was willing to bury (briefly) the hatchet he had newly sharpened so as to assault his critical rivals. G. W. Fink, Rochlitz's unworthy successor on the mighty *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung*, approved this novel method of direction; and Schumann, whose *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* was intended as a counter to the despised "Knif" and all his works, joined in the welcome. Mendelssohn was promptly made a member of Schumann's fictional Davidsbund, even if there was perhaps a tang of satire in his name, "F. Meritis".

The present book of essays celebrates a relationship that was by no means unclouded but in which each recognized the stature of the other. As Leon Plantinga records, in one of the best contributions, Schumann was as quick to put his finger on Mendelssohn's gifts – which immediately dazzled a wide and grateful audience – as he was to voice certain anxieties. A pioneering Romantic, Schumann was worried about Mendelssohn's dependence upon earlier models, chiefly Bach, Gluck and Beethoven; and he found Mendelssohn's abilities often more impressive than his actual compositions. Not surprisingly, it was the Scottish Symphony, Mendelssohn's most Romantic and in some ways most Schumannesque, that the critic Schumann found his most important; though even here, the music is considered too filled with "well-mannered grace", especially when set (rather unfairly) beside Schubert's Great C major Symphony.

For all the verve and intelligence of his criticisms, Schumann was writing partly to his own theory of history and partly by reference to his own creative needs, as composer-critics are bound to do – Weber before him, Berlioz across the frontier in Paris, Wagner waiting in the wings. Nevertheless, his assessment of Mendelssohn remains both penetrating and fair; and Mendelssohn, though capable of fiercer outbursts of rage than his amiable reputation would suggest, seems to have accepted comment with a good grace. Certainly he did much, in his position as conductor of the Gewandhaus, to further Schumann's cause. It is a mild irony that the same Great C major Symphony was first given in the city by Mendelssohn at Schumann's urging; publication by Breitkopf and Härtel swiftly followed. Mendelssohn also conducted Schumann's first two symphonies, lavishing much care on their preparation; and he tried to secure publication of *Paradies und die Peri* and to get Schumann a teaching post at the Conservatory.

Despite these warily cordial exchanges, the two were creatively at some distance from each other; and most of the essays here do not attempt to show otherwise. However, there is much interesting material gathered together. Some is of permanent musicological value. Rufus Hallmark, a scholar with a particular sensitivity to the creative processes revealed in the study of sketches, examines material from Schumann's D minor Symphony; and Friedhelm Krumacher makes a useful investigation of some of Mendelssohn's late chamber music. The childhood manuscript books, in the Deutsche Staatsbibliothek, have long been known to scholars: they are fascinating to work through, and contain material needing rescue for publication and even performance. The later MSS have been harder of access and much less studied.

In a section called, for want of a better term, "Contextual Studies", the essays include an account based on source work at that other great repository of Mendelssohniana, the Bodleian Library: this is a survey of the correspondence addressed to Mendelssohn by his elder sister Fanny Hensel. Fanny deserves some attention, and the author of this essay, Marcia J. Citron, is one of the few who have taken her music seriously. Queen Victoria was another. She admired a song from Mendelssohn's Op 9, only to be told by the rueful "composer" that it was really by his sister. Miss Citron's account, from the so-called Green-Books Collection in Oxford, not only does justice to Fanny but sheds light on some points to do with Felix, his relationship with his family and also matters such as the stages of a piece's composition. Fanny's comments have the intelligent candour of a colleague as well as a sister.

The other useful article in this section, by Ralph P. Locke, records Mendelssohn's "collision" with the Saint-Simonians. A man of his poise in a world that seemed so nicely balanced to him may appear an unlikely candidate for membership of their well-intentioned but distinctly hazy movement; but it had already attracted more predictable interest from Berlioz, Halévy and the young Liszt. As Locke shows, Mendelssohn was persuaded from initial irritation into taking the brotherhood seriously, before rejecting it with a vehemence that suggests disturbance by it at some level.

The editors themselves bring up the rear with two essays on literary influences. Jon W. Finson suggests that Shakespeare was "every bit as important to Schumann" as he was to Berlioz, Nicolai, Weber, Mendelssohn and Verdi ("Weber" must be a slip for "Wagner": Weber never wrote a Shakespeare opera, but Wagner did, and deeply admired Shakespeare). He traces the influence of Shakespeare on the German Romantics, typically a cautious and gradual process beside the sensational impact on French classical sensibilities in the 1820s. There are two little-known drafts for a "Sinfonia per il Hamlet" among Schumann's sketch-books; Finson cannot determine what they were intended for, though he intriguingly raises the question of a symphony on the lines of Berlioz's *Romeo and Juliet*. Given the nature of Schumann's later *Scenes from Faust*, the suggestion is not impossible.

R. Larry Todd, who has already published a valuable study of *The Hebrides*, broadens that discussion to link Mendelssohn more specifically with Ossian. In doing so, he somewhat strains the evidence. The undoubted enthusiasm for the Ossian fakes which swept Europe's musicians as well as her writers held Mendelssohn in its grip, but it was more the actual experience of Scotland, imaginatively sensed through Ossian and no less through Scott, rather than specifically Ossianic references, that coloured Mendelssohn's music, Mendelssohn's overture influenced Gade's *Echoes of Ossian*, but that does not prove that his own alternative title "Fingal's Cave" is more than generally evocative.

Professor Todd is on more secure ground when he gives a valuable account of a late work, still unpublished, *On Lena's Gloomy Heath*. One of two surviving MSS is in the Bodleian, and it does indeed look worth a hearing. If Todd's level, articulate account of it leads to one, he will have added to his already major efforts on Mendelssohn's behalf.

Idealist exotica

Hugh Macdonald

DOROTHY VEINUS HAGAN
Félicien David 1810–1876: A composer and a cause
239pp. New York: Syracuse University Press. $32.
0 8156 2321 6

It is brave of the Syracuse University Press to open their series Arts and Ideas with an unfinished posthumous study of a composer whose works are unknown to concert halls and opera houses and whose name is missing from record catalogues and even, as far as I can recall, from *Radio Times*. Who has ever heard a note of Félicien David's music – except for some songs which may have survived here and there and his once-celebrated *Le Désert*, revived by Butler University's Romantic Music Festival in Indianapolis in 1969 and by David's home town Cadenet, in the Vaucluse, for the centenary in 1976?

Yet David was classed by René Dumesnil in his assessment of French Romantic music as runner-up to Berlioz, and *Le Désert* had been acclaimed as a masterpiece by Berlioz himself at its première in 1844. Its exotic appeal, with caravans, muezzins and the angular intervals supposedly displayed by Arab music, made it a runaway success and gave David a leading position in the opera houses of the Second Empire. He exploited his gift for the picturesque by setting his works in Brazil, in Columbus's New World, in the Garden of Eden, even, although there was never much chance of disguising the slenderness of his musical gifts and it would be difficult to assert a claim for revival of his works today.

Two things endear David to historians, however. One is the example he set to more gifted composers who followed in his steps: Berlioz in *L'Enfance du Christ*, Bizet in *Les Pêcheurs de perles*, Massenet in *Le Roi de Lahore*, and others, all representing a taste prominent in the music of those generations for vaguely oriental or middle-eastern colour. To this valuable aspect of David's work Dorothy Hagan pays no attention, since she was absorbed throughout her life by the other distinction of his career, his commitment to the Saint-Simonian movement which he never renounced, and by the part which music can play in an idealist social movement of this type.

David was sucked into Saint-Simonism on his arrival in Paris from the provinces in 1830. He joined the movement's retreat to Ménilmontant, where he composed hymns for their rituals, and was a member of the expedition to Egypt in 1832 where the devotees sought a new social order under the leadership of Père Enfantin. It was the Egyptian trip which gave David the inspiration and the tunes for later successful works, but it is David's lifelong dependence on Enfantin's sometimes crazy patronage that provides the focus of the book.

What is Saint-Simonian music, after all? Can ideologies have musical style? The question is touched on at many points, but Dr Hagan too readily trips on the fallacy of arguing that David was a Saint-Simonian, David wrote music, therefore David's music is Saint-Simonian. It is tempting simply to accept David's work as ephemerally dependent on fashionable Parisian taste and to recognize that political movements require the plainest music if they are to become popular. This David was able to supply, and the texts of some works, such as *Christopher Columbus* and *La Perle de Brésil*, did perhaps reflect Enfantin's ideas, albeit without much force.

The book is sadly incomplete in that David's instrumental works (a string quartet, some trios, a nonet for brass, four symphonies) are scarcely even mentioned, and the important ten years before *Le Désert* are rapidly skipped over. An opening chapter (on social reform movements in France) and a limp conclusion have been supplied by others, and the musical examples, which do little to advocate David's cause, have been selected by yet further hands to brighten the text. The style, it must be said, is discouragingly opaque, and the author too willingly regards contemporary critics as holy writ; perhaps as an evasion of the task of really estimating the worth of David's work. It is a unique chapter of musical history, but not one in which the music itself can claim central importance.

Bestriding the repertory

Rupert Christiansen

ELIZABETH FORBES
Mario and Grisi: A biography
225pp. Gollancz. £14.95.
0575036060

The brief and melancholy history of opera's efforts to drag itself out of the chains of patronage and into the world of nineteenth-century entrepreneurship remains unwritten, although John Rosselli's recent monograph on *The Opera Industry in Italy* has shown how profitably the methods of economics and sociology can be applied to the topic. Elizabeth Forbes's new biography of two of the major commercial commodities of the era treads more familiar ground – the life-stories of star personalities, their roles, foibles and rewards – and the perspectives are disappointingly narrow. She does not offer, for instance, any real exploration of the way that the 1847 re-opening of Covent Garden was financed and organized; or of the effect of a suburban railway service on the constitution of a metropolitan audience. Such questions are central to discussion of how and why Mario and Grisi were so successful.

Forbes is also reluctant to be drawn into any analysis of the vocal styles of her subjects, preferring to rely on the contemporary reports of Chorley, Cox and Gautier rather than risking conjectures of her own. And yet both Mario and Grisi bridge some fascinating and complex developments in the repertory, about which, in performance terms, very little is understood. Giulia Grisi began her career under the mantle of Pasta – they sang together in the première of *Norma* in 1831 – at a time when the great "soprano" voices characteristically cultivated a strong downward extension in the chest register and forced their top at the expense of secure intonation and a smoothly produced middle voice. Grisi, however, had an evenness throughout a long range that allowed her to make the jump from Rossini and Bellini to Meyerbeer and middle-period Verdi. Mario began as a *tenore di grazia*, imitating Rubini and his falsetto, but ended up in his mid-fifties (with the help of unceasing consumption of best Havana tobacco) strong enough to negotiate the elegance of *Faust* and *Un ballo in maschera*.

None of this is a matter of freaks of physical endowment: a great voice is not just a miracle of nature, but a phenomenon trained and shaped to particular musical ends. Forbes marshals all the relevant facts, without drawing any conclusions from them. A potentially interesting statement like "the public welcomed the larger, more powerful voices needed to cope with the heavier orchestration of the French school exemplified by Meyerbeer" is left without qualification or explanation.

As straight-faced narration, the book works much better. Forbes deals coolly with a lot of the areas sensationalized by Victorian journalists or avoided by pious family memorialists. We are given, for instance, a full account of Grisi's affair with Castlereagh's son and a sober one of her over-dramatized feud with Pauline Viardot. Her central achievement – an impressively steady command of the early Italian dramatic repertory, lasting from 1830 to 1860 – is exhaustively documented.

Mario's story is perhaps the more interesting of the two. Son of a Sardinian *marchese*, his liberal opinions embarrassed him out of the army. Spoilt, lazy and devastatingly handsome, he found that singing earned him large sums of money for comparatively little effort and so duly outraged his family by taking to the stage. In 1839 he met the beautiful Grisi, already an established prima donna, who had recently separated from a "porco infame" of a first husband. Subsequently he became her lifelong consort and regular stage partner, in a union which had for the Victorians something of the glamour of an operatic Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh.

Grisi was determined and energetic, a woman capable of considerable ruthlessness when her own interests were threatened; Mario was all charm and managed to pass through life with the minimum of aggravation. In a profession noted for its telegrams and anger, they represent a rare stability: it is a pity that Elizabeth Forbes has not painted them more imaginatively.

After lost order

Christopher Reid

PETER FULLER
Images of God: The consolations of lost illusions
320pp. Tigerstripe/Chatto and Windus. Paperback, £4.95.
0 7011 2962 X

Peter Fuller writes with an energy and a forthrightness rare among his colleagues in the business of art journalism. His pronouncements, whether one agrees with them or not, appear to be animated by the conviction that painting, sculpture and other forms of visual expression are supremely important activities requiring the most serious consideration, and this too distinguishes him from the ruck. He is a skilful and sometimes ferocious debater, with an impressive intellectual grounding, not only in aesthetic matters, but also in political theory and psychology, disciplines from which he has drawn many of the insights that sustain his work. The magazines and periodicals that employ him are given good value, and he is lucky for his part to have the generous space customarily made available to him by their editors.

So, where other collections of reviews and occasional articles would probably end up looking like the attempted resuscitation of mayflies, the thirty-nine pieces by Peter Fuller in *Images of God* transcend their ephemeral origin and offer a substantial and coherent critique of the contemporary art scene. Even when his subjects are Ruskin and Morris, or Gaudier-Brzeska and Soutine, Fuller contrives to emphasize their present significance in a world where he sees little to commend.

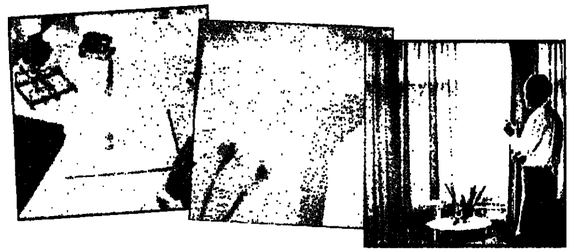
The utopian speculations of Ruskin and Morris, which Fuller does not accept without qualification, have none the less acted formatively on his own view of things. His repeated *lament for the absence of a "shared symbolic order" of the kind that would nourish fruitful* artistic endeavour, bringing together artist and public in an embrace that modernism, as he interprets it, with its factional and autistic tendencies, has done nothing to encourage, is utopian in spirit. As a confessed non-Christian, Fuller looks back to a time when the Church in Europe provided just such an order, and his belief is that at certain periods, even when that order was disintegrating, artists supplied consolation for its loss in the form of work whose purpose was imaginatively to transfigure the world of visual experience and thereby reconcile humanity to it. Among other pieces in *Images of God*, there are discussions of landscape painting, of the Neo-Romantic movement, and of Henry Moore's exemplary, if not unassailable, achievement, that develop this theme illuminatingly.

Fuller's opinions spring primarily from political and ethical considerations and many of his judgments can be explained only in this light. The blatant amorality of Francis Bacon's career is the pretext for a laboriously baffled enquiry, whereas the overt moral seriousness of Rouault earns him high marks. Fuller also purports to admire John Piper, whose studies of ruins, for instance, appear to him "to sparkle with the promise of decorative redemption", but this will hardly satisfy the person who reads Piper's "fluent lines, and jewel-like dashes of colour" as signs of glibness and a regrettable penchant for gaudy effect. Even more unpersuasive cases are made out for the solemn whimsies of Cecil Collins and the anatomically disastrous carvings of the sculptor Glynn Williams.

By contrast, Fuller is almost always exhilarating when he is on the attack, and many of the figures, artists and writers on art, at whom he takes pot-shots and side-swipes, unquestionably deserve the treatment they are given. His taste for invective, however, can lead him to merely spiteful utterance; and there is a telling instance when, in the throes of demolishing Graham Sutherland's reputation, he dismisses the greater part of that painter's work as "lifeless, dead and unconvincing". Lifeless *and* dead? Then it must be bad.

No doubt there are many who would consider Fuller reactionary in his objectives, but he has already met that rebuke by calling one of his more important essays "John Ruskin: A Radical Conservative", and another "William Morris: A Conservationist Radical". In the latter, he states his opinion that "the importance of William Morris today lies in his radical aesthetic conservatism", a necessary corrective, it is suggested, to the extremist tendencies of both left and right in politics. Aesthetic extremism as cultivated by certain avant-garde artists and their supporters within the mandarin world of galleries and museums is likewise to be deplored. The case of Andy Warhol is typical. "Warhol's relinquishment of imagination," Fuller writes, "his collusion with the creatively sterile techniques of anonymous mass-production and contemporary advertising, his refusal of aesthetic values, all represented the occlusion and eclipse of everything I believed to be worthwhile about the production of art." Expressed like this, Fuller's anger at the major betrayal of art that he considers to have been engineered, suicidally, from within the art world itself, is stirringly conveyed.

Fuller may be reactionary to the extent that he reacts without inhibition against what strikes him as a pernicious status quo, and that seems to me an honourable quality. He is often intemperate and sometimes erratic in his judgments, but the general thrust of his arguments should be heeded. It is probable that he has many enemies in positions of eminence and power – enemies who dignify his cause. What marks him as exceptional is that his remains a moral voice in a world that long ago submitted apathetically to nihilism and empty gesture. If only he were able to press his argument a stage further and demonstrate the means by which a "shared symbolic order" might be restored. In his preface to *The Anathemata* David Jones declared: "There have been culture-phases when the maker and the society in which he lived shared an enclosed and common background, where the terms of reference were common to all. It would be an affectation to pretend that such was our situation today." That point still needs to be answered.



Reproduced from Marc Camille Chaimowicz's Café du Rêve *(Thames and Hudson. £12.95. 0 500 27392 8), the publication of which will coincide with the opening of his exhibition* – Café du Rêve: Paintings and Associated Artworks *on September 17 at the Nigel Greenwood Gallery, 4 New Burlington Street, London W1X 1FE*

The elastic age

Suzi Gablik

CORINNE ROBINS
The Pluralist Era: American art 1968–1981
246pp. Harper and Row. £18.
0 06 438448 8

In *The Pluralist Era* Corinne Robins documents the end of modernism and the beginning of the rise of pluralism. Mrs Robins begins with an account of the growth of SoHo in New York as an important art centre, and follows it with seven essays, on process and conceptual art, on artists' protest movements of the 1970s – when numerous coalition groups tried to improve relations between artists and museums, and feminist art programmes were instituted at some universities – on earthworks and site sculptures, pattern painting, super realism, abstract art after minimalism and, finally, an inclusive essay on photography, video and performance.

The 1970s were an era which saw the transformation of art into something provisional, unfixed, elastic. Sculpture was being made from materials like felt, chalk, mineral oil, paper towelling, flour, poured rubber, liquid lead, and ball-bearings arranged on the floor. These impermanent materials were "distributed" or scattered, rather than constructed in any schematic way. Richard Serra's list of "art acts" included rolling, creasing, folding, bending, twisting, crumpling, shaving, tearing, chipping, splitting, cutting, severing and dropping. This was the period when Michael Heizer made a drawing by using his motorcycle to cut a narrow track in the desert, and Charles Simonds buried himself in a clay landscape; he then had himself filmed, emerging slowly, as in a symbolic birth. Robert Smithson was making work from debris slides, rock avalanches and lava flows and Christo was wrapping coastlines. While Joseph Beuys spent a week in a Spring Street loft with a live coyote, William Wegman was teaching his dog, Man Ray, to spell.

Occasional essays such as these have the advantage of being accessible to the non-specialist, and Robins's style is unpretentious and readable. But *The Pluralist Era* contributes little to the explication of recent and significant artistic trends. The author does not provide us with an overview, nor with any historical or contextual analysis which might tell us what (if anything) these vogues have in common, or why certain ideas are so compelling. Instead the approach is journalistically earnest in its search for anecdote but lacking in analysis. Too much of the text reads like a series of brief biographies, and what critical commentary there is has been enlisted almost entirely from other writers.

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41 Bedford Square London WC1B 3DQ

Benefits of economic theory

Michael Lipton

AMARTYA SEN
Resources, Values and Development
547pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.
0 631 13342 9

The first eleven papers in this splendid collection, mostly written in 1966–75, deal with the surprising implications, for human well-being and for policy, of some standard issues in mainstream economic analysis: the response of workers to wages, and to the prospects from self-employment; differences between individual and societal savings plans; the proper prices to be used in costing alternative ways to build public-sector projects. The last nine papers, from 1979–83, deal with newer issues, on the borders between economics and philosophy: the ethics of income distribution; the relationship between availability of output, legal entitlements to it, and the capability of turning entitlements into well-being; and the nature of transactions within families. Both groups of papers deal with "welfare economics" – with the study of how, on alternative assumptions, different economic outcomes (and hence decisions leading to them) should be evaluated and ranked – but from two unusual perspectives: Amartya Sen draws both on moral and political philosophy, and on the evidence of peasant behaviour in very poor countries.

His prose is nearly always clear and witty. Several of the papers could be read by any intelligent person; even in the more technical ones, most of the mathematics is accessible to any economist. But what is the use of Professor Sen's theorizing? Could, or should, it alter the behaviour of policy-makers?

Sen shows that it is possible to move logically from perfectly sensible economic assumptions to some surprising findings. Three examples must suffice. First, if some members of a peasant household emigrate, the remaining members may well do enough extra work to replace most of the emigrants' "lost" farm output – especially if the State does not hold down the likely increases in its price. Second, savers – unless each attaches a special relative valuation to his own consumption, that of his direct descendants and that of other people – will each, in isolation, decide to save less than each would wish to save if he could enforce a joint savings plan; and altruism, in the absence of some enforceable social contract, will not resolve this dilemma. Third, according to the different reasons why market wage-rates exceed peasants' earnings on their own farms, identical policies in poor countries may have opposite effects on employment. Theory thus matters; it shows that some plausible policies (eg, to make food cheaper, or to reduce public savings) can have unwanted and serious side-effects.

The central message of these brilliant papers is that many of these side-effects cast grave doubt on the economic reasoning which argues from "private motivation [to the] public good through the intermediary of the market". It is those who experience markets most directly who are the most sceptical of such reasoning. Politicians, even on the Right, believe it less than business economists, and much less than general economists. Its limitations are clearly exposed in the chapter entitled "The Profit Motive". First, the invisible hand produces "the public good" only on "terribly demanding" assumptions (eg, no economies of scale). Second, it is a very limited good, viz, efficient use of resources at some given income distribution; it does not rule out starvation, even if all voters would settle for a bit less "efficiency" to prevent that. Third, unswerving pursuit of self-interest "can be a serious impediment to enjoying life" and even to success within firms – or to stability within families. Fourth, none of these problems is purely theoretical. In the three worst famine areas of Bangladesh in 1974, although food was unusually plentiful, market effects pushed down real wages, and thus killed people. Conversely, the triumphant growth in East Asia, especially South Korea, reflects not an invisible hand but a State interventionism almost unparalleled in capitalist societies.

Professor Sen is not advocating intervention by the State as such, nor denying that self-interest is one of many important springs of human action. He is, however, denying that the injunction "leave it to the market" is a tolerable, or often even a consistent or comprehensible, guide to economic policy. This denial is reasoned, not dogmatic, and his theoretical conclusions could often be backed up by much evidence. For example, private rates of preference for present over future income – even if unanimous – commonly diverge both from market rates on interest, and from the rates that would prevail if a "social contract" on savings quantities could be reached. The methods of benefit/cost analysis frequently, and improperly, assume that other public goals – redistribution, employment, regional fairness, freer trading – are so adequately met by general public policy that individual projects can ignore them and seek "efficiency" in isolation. Most fundamentally the analysis of an economy in "general equilibrium" tacitly assumes that the survival chances – and hence mobility in order to engage in new activity – of an economic agent are not greatly affected by his or her choice; this is not a true approximation where extreme poverty greatly raises the risk of death from starvation.

Thus Sen's theoretical worries about market modes of economic analysis – while open, as we shall see, to sharp counter-attack – could often be supported empirically. His discussions, moreover, demonstrate the agreeable equation that wit plus rigour equals clarity. The wit is most consistently (and illuminatingly) demonstrated in a dialogue between the Buddha and the Venerable Subhuti, born again as an economist, on the measurement of capital. The rigour is neither austere nor frightening, but becomes a particular virtue when it is used as here to separate the concepts that are often confused. The wit and rigour combine as clarity, in an anti-utilitarian parable that explains why we so often disagree about the priority among moral claims on income – and why, even if we do agree our verdicts so often depend on how much we know about each claimant, who should get a flute about which [three] boys are quarrelling? . . . Boy A plays the flute well and with great pleasure . . . Boy B . . . has very few . . . other sources of pleasure and is [much the least] happy . . . Boy C made the flute with his own labour".

Sometimes, however, Sen's clarity is marred by an excessive charity. He destroys the doctrine that poverty is a relative concept, for example, but his clear exposition of the relativist case involves concessions that may enable relativists to persist in confusing poverty with inequality. Yet even this has a good outcome, for it leads him to develop a simple yet very important idea. We are rich or poor, he argues, not in goods; nor even in the utility we derive from goods (which can indeed be relative to other people's utility), for a "grumbling rich man may well be less happy than a contented peasant, but he does have a higher standard of living"; but in the absolute *capabilities* that goods confer upon us. Such capabilities confer "freedom to do", which is the real goal of economic life. Starvation is intolerable not so much because, in killing, it destroys "utility" (a desperate Ethiopian might echo Housman: "life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose") but because it destroys human capability.

Thus, Sen separates "the notion of a *good* (eg rice); that of a *characteristic* of a good (eg giving calories . . .); that of [*capability*] of a *person* (eg living without calorie deficiency); and that of *utility* (. . . pleasure or desire fulfilment from the functioning in question . . .)". This is much more than category-building. Economists are concerned with conversion efficiency; yet economics has scarcely ever explored what choices might more efficiently convert goods into desirable characteristics, the latter into capabilities, and these in turn into utility. On the latter conversion, Sen expresses doubts: it smacks of teaching "the underdog . . . to bear the burden so well that he or she overlooks the burden itself" through a quietist tolerance of low capability. However, improved conversions of characteristics into capabilities are usually most desirable. If undernourished people can learn to perform the same physical or mental tasks, without added discomfort or risk, on fewer calories – for example, because of improved timing of work or food – these people clearly benefit, since their food intake becomes more ade-

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Secker & Warburg

quate, which enhances their capabilities to choose new activities (and to fight disease, or even oppression).

Similarly, it can be literally vital to improve the conversion of goods into characteristics. For hungry people, especially children, there are major gains if dietary energy, and to a lesser extent proteins and vitamins, are more readily absorbable from each unit of food eaten. Weaning foods, in root-crop cultures especially, often present major problems of bulk – the child is full of cellulose and fibre before it has had enough nourishment. If cassava or maize varieties were selected to improve the efficiency with which cooked weight is converted into nutrients readily absorbable by initially undernourished weanlings, another link in Sen's chain of conversions, that from goods to characteristics, would be strengthened. In nutrition (and in shelter, transport, etc), as well as economics, this chain – from goods into characteristics into capability into utility – could help in building new and powerful tools for research to enhance human life. So, perhaps, *could decisions or incentives* which led firms to produce outputs maximizing, not profits, but the adequacy of entitlements to goods and thus to capabilities.

A counter-attack on Sen's arguments might go as follows. Market economics is like a sea, in which all must swim. Most economies and most economists do so gladly, because it is the only sea we have. Sen identifies theoretical sharks – some familiar, some new – and shows how they can kill real people. But the problem is how to muzzle or avoid the sharks, consistent with market functioning. Sen would, instead, have us swim on dry land.

Thus, on his model, firms are presumably to be switched from responding to market-determined opportunities for profit, to constructing their activities so that the resulting legal entitlements of workers and their families are adequate. *And individual consumers' welfare is to be assessed, not by the evidence of their* utilites from different purchases as revealed by their choices in the market-place, but by the "capabilities" they enjoy from using the items purchased. But it is the market's costs and prices which create – as Sen's approach fails to create – the *reliable valuations* that enable firms to choose, in response to market incentives, what and how to produce so as best to achieve their goals, mainly profits. Similarly, families with different preferences between rice and wheat, or food and clothing, can compare their own relative gains (utilities) from extra purchases of these items with market prices that reflect, albeit imperfectly, the relative costs of production.

Thus profitability – output costs minus input costs – provides a measure allowing firms, capitalist or socialist, to decide what to make and how: to weight the relative values of their activities and to select the highest-valued ones, in response to signals from consumer demands. Similarly, utility – the welfare-gain from a purchase, minus losses from foregoing the cash – provides a measure allowing families to weigh the relative values of their potential purchases, and to select the highest-valued. Production for adequate entitlements, or consumption for adequate capabilities, does not guide any except the very simplest firms or consumers – eg, firms able only to convert unsupported effort into rice, on a fixed land surface, or consumers able only to use cash to buy rice. In less basic economies, the market model is indispensable.

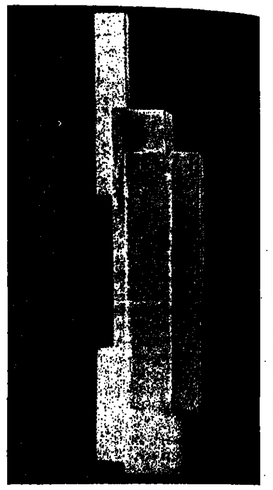
There, the entitlements-capabilities model cannot guide actions by firms or families. Hence there is no link between the use of the model by an outsider, to evaluate their contribution to welfare, and incentives to welfare-increasing actions by firms or households themselves. Probably, as Sen says, market economists have overstated the extent to which such a link is provided by price-signals, profit-seeking by firms, and utility-seeking by households. He should help us to improve the linkage between decisions and right actions. But instead he implicitly asks us to operate without clear incentives or linkages at all: to move from production-for-profit and consumption-for-utility as measured in and mediated by markets, to production to create adequate (but unweighted) legal entitlements and consumption for enhanced (but unweighted) capabilities, all measured and mediated by nothing obvious.

A counter-attack in these terms would be unduly complacent, but Sen may need to secure *his flank against it, especially as regards* incentives. He makes too sharp a distinction, for example, between "incentive arguments for inequality" and "arguments based on entitlement or desert". If very poor people are enriched most effectively in the three to ten-year term by using public resources to make incentives (income gains) – for themselves *or for others* – conditional upon growing more cheap food, it is not obviously "moral" to use up the resources to make direct income grants to the very poor now. Analogously, if we accept that some children must have "access to television [in order] to follow the school programme" – ie, to create the same set of capabilities as other children obtain from less high-tech schooling – we create incentives for districts or nations to adopt TV-linked schooling, so that TV grants must be added unto them, and the society's resources for spreading simpler methods of education to all are reduced.

The lack of a certain human capability, such as literacy or shelter, means absolute poverty. The costs of satisfying that capability – the commodities needed – are relative to climate, personal health and so on. But incentives are *morally* relevant to how far it is sensible to go in this direction. Provide extra public services to allow for "transport, pollution effects [of] urbanization", and it is encouraged, the costs of provision are raised, and resources to alleviate poverty cut. Or follow the poverty relativists in accepting that a person's requirements increase as a community's living-standards come to "require" linen sheets – or cars – and you create perverse incentives to choose costlier ways of providing warmth or mobility, in *the expectation of social provision. Capabilities* to be warm and mobile are needed to avoid absolute poverty; the capability to meet such needs expensively, and the sense that doing so cheaply creates "shame" or loss of self-respect are the result of perverse incentives.

Provided only that aggregate demand is managed sensibly (or is not a problem), shame should attach to waste, and self-respect to self-reliance. Of course, especially in poor societies, major redistribution is a desirable object of moral and political concern and action. But, given the attainable degree of equality, to assign some people or some targets (eg, urban housing) the resources allegedly needed to avoid "relative poverty" is to divert those resources, possibly away from helping to keep other people or other targets (eg, rural nutrition) above absolute poverty levels; and to encourage people to move where targets are more generously provided for, thereby increasing such diversion. The interaction between resources, incentives and goal-fulfilment produces "market" results that undermine Sen's admirable "non-market" moral aims.

Nevertheless, Sen is here hacking his way through a conceptual and moral undergrowth that most market economists leave severely alone. The successive transformations from output – via characteristics of products, trade and availability, and entitlement – into capabilities and the "freedom to do", may well suggest a whole new range of possibilities for using economics, in conjunction with other disciplines such as medicine and agronomy, to convert scarce resources more efficiently into human welfare. At levels above that of absolute poverty, it will not be easy to define, compare, evaluate and add up the worth of people's socially desirable capabilities; nor even of those capabilities that the private buyer wants each product to contribute to him – for they (unlike a contribution to what he perceives as his utility) are not reflected in the prices he is willing to pay. Moreover, as I have suggested, market interaction may undermine the welfare targets Professor Sen seeks to meet. But these targets, with their emphasis on the function of goods in enlarging human capabilities, offer a new and promising way out of the tired debates between libertarians and utilitarians over interventionism.



Kurt Schwitters's untitled sculpture (1923) is reproduced from Kurt Schwitters *by John Elderfield (423pp with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £30. 0 500 23426 4) which will be reviewed in the* TLS *later this year.*

Fully interlocking

Leslie Hannah

JOHN SCOTT and CATHERINE GRIFF
Directors of Industry: The British corporate network 1904–76
226pp. Polity Press, 108 Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1JF. £19.50.
0 74560019 0.

Élites have an irresistible fascination, and business élites have the added attraction of moneyed power. However, this book is not, as the title might suggest, a damning exposé of Eton-educated directors in City boardrooms, or a British sociologist's gloss on *Dallas*. Rather, it focuses, originally and tightly, on the quantifiable changes among the directors of the top fifty financial and top 200 non-financial businesses in twentieth-century Britain, and particularly on the links between boards at three dates: 1904, 1938 and 1976.

The dangers of this kind of study are well known from the landscape of corpses left by previous attempts to render the raw data tractable to analysis. Links in personnel obviously exist between the boards of, say, ICI and of Barclays Bank and Commercial Union, but what does that mean? It may be because British industry is in the tight grip of the money-motivated moguls of finance capitalism. Or it *may be the result of the decisions of self-*perpetuating oligarchies to offer undeserved sweeteners to former schoolfellows. On the other hand, business functions may require such interlocks to maintain a respectably efficient economic machine. Financial management skills may be in short supply, so that it is sensible for capital-intensive and financially orientated businesses to share their top decision-makers. As Japanese experience suggests, interlocks falling short of full ownership and subordination within one enterprise may add to the efficiency with which the flow of economic activity in a modern industrial economy is co-ordinated. Yet no studies of interlocking directors in any country have gone satisfactorily beyond a description of the surface characteristics of the links, to develop a convincing theory of their motivations and consequences. This book is no exception, but it is a measure of its sophistication that it scratches a good deal further below the surface than its predecessors.

The first step on this path is meticulous scholarship and factual accuracy. There are extreme pitfalls in seeking for the truth on directorships and intercorporate links, but as far as I can see, the authors have slipped into only one, and that a pardonable one. The reader will sympathize with their supposition that Sir Alastair Pilkington was related to the family owners of the Pilkington firm of which he was chairman. Yet, as T. C. Barker has shown in his masterly study of *The Glassmakers*, there is no connection, at least as far back as the thirteenth century, between Sir Alastair's branch – the Pilkingtons of Reading – and the St Helens family.

The second rock in the study of interlocking directorates on which most earlier attempts have foundered is one which Scott and Griff triumphantly avoid: that of measuring the degree of cohesiveness and density in the intercorporate network. They present a complex and difficult, but precise and intelligent set of measures of interlocking, which the non-specialist would be well advised not to skip, for the terminology of the art cannot be grasped intuitively and much of the later material is unfathomable if it is not mastered. The painful definitional excursus is, however, relieved by the authors' genuine understanding of the historical background.

The measures developed enable comparisons between countries and periods to be made with some precision. It appears that in Britain there was an increase in the degree of interlocking of directorates in the early decades of the twentieth century, but that later such links declined – largely, the authors suggest, because they were less necessary when the economy became more concentrated. Interlocking was less prevalent than in the United States at the time of the Morgan "money trust", and even today remains somewhat less centralized than in many European countries. These findings stand out, but the indicators developed reveal more subtle changes. For example, networks based in the regions – the Tennant group in Glasgow, the Chamberlains in Birmingham, of the Armstrong connection in Newcastle (links which incidentally lay at the heart of the political and cultural vitality of the Edwardian provinces) – are shown to have declined.

Further chapters consider the role of family ownership and kinship networks, the Quaker and Jewish business cousinhoods, and the viability of theories of "finance capitalism". The authors' interpretative strength on these issues derives from their resourceful massing of a complex set of information. Their data enable them to shed new light on many of these issues and the book's freshness comes from its empirical content rather than from new theoretical insights.

A third objective of research in the field is to illuminate the significance of the links described for economic efficiency: in this Scott and Griff are least successful. Much in current developments in the analysis of economic success implies that neither Adam Smith's "invisible hand" of the market nor Alfred Chandler's "visible hand" of bureaucratic hierarchies adequately explain it. Rather, a "third hand" of networks and interrelationships – sometimes based on trust and reciprocity alone, and sometimes on webs of more easily observed and measured connections – appears to be an important component. The authors make a brave attempt to fit their data into this debate and identify them with the causes of Britain's economic decline, but their attempt is unconvincing. They also do less than justice to factors such as the increasing professionalism of the boardrooms of City institutions and the resolution of the battles of the 1960s between the gentlemen and the players for access to City boards, changes which have vitally affected the ability of banks and insurance companies to compete in the new world of international financial deregulation and competition which is emerging.

Despite these lacunae, *Directors of Industry* will be a necessary starting-point for all future students of the role of interlocking directorships in British business.

Queen of torments

Michael Ignatieff

EDWARD PETERS
Torture
202pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £17.50 (paperback, £5.95).
0 631 13723 8

In 1874, Victor Hugo surveyed his century and announced that torture had ceased to exist. The wave which had begun with Montaigne and Bayle, Voltaire and Beccaria, seemed to have swept torture from the statute book and the interrogation rooms of Europe. The abolition of torture seemed to vindicate the Victorian belief that progress was a moral as well as a technological fact.

A century later, torture is practised in over ninety countries, and not just where we find it easy to think of it – in Guatemala or Uganda – but in states which proclaim themselves the heirs of that Enlightenment tradition: Israel, France and Great Britain. One of the pieties about torture is that a heritage of civil liberties is sufficient to keep it out of a country's interrogation cells. The Amnesty reports on the occupied territories of the West Bank and Northern Ireland are proof to the contrary.

Edward Peters, a medieval historian from the University of Pennsylvania, has written a masterful analytical history of torture's emergence in Roman law, its insertion into the medieval law of proof, its gradual abolition after 1750, and its dreadful recrudescence in modern times. The book is an exemplary application of historical scholarship to an issue where emotions tend to run ahead of reason, and as such it is a worthy successor to another volume in the same series, Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism*. Like John Langbein, with whose astringent and brilliant book *Torture and the Law of Proof* he is in dialogue throughout, Peters argues its indispensability to a Roman and medieval legal system in which "the queen of proofs" – the personal confession of the suspect – depended on the "queen of torments". Even in areas of Europe where torture was not part of the legal tradition, as in Scandinavia, the Low Countries and England, torture began to appear in the law in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries for those serious crimes – like treason and sedition – where only an extracted confession could provide the evidence to justify conviction and a capital execution.

Unlike Langbein, Peters does not dismiss as a fairy-tale the historiography which attributes torture's gradual disappearance after 1750 to Enlightenment humanitarianism, but he agrees with Langbein that the decisive change was not in the European conscience but in the emergence of imprisonment and increased judicial discretion. These changes allowed judges to convict on lesser charges rather than having to rely on the forcible confession considered necessary for conviction in a capital case. It was as standards of evidence changed, in other words, and as non-capital penalties came into being, that the queen of proofs and the queen of torments lost their place at the pinnacle of Continental jurisprudence. If there was always less use of torture in English than in Continental law, it was not because the English were more sentimental but because English juries were able to send offenders to their deaths without requiring the confessions stipulated as necessary for conviction in Continental law.

Hugo's statement that torture had ceased in Europe coincided, in fact, with its resurgence. Torture was one of the camp followers in the Great Powers' blind march towards the First World War. The erosion of cosmopolitan internationalism, the increasing use of spies, the growing importance of military intelligence, the virus of racial and national pride – each played a part in legitimizing the renewed use of torture. At the same time, the internal pacification of these societies – the growth of police forces and internal state security apparatuses – multiplied the parts of the state archipelago which could escape the scrutiny of press, parliament and public opinion. After 1919, the rise of the totalitarian state in Italy, the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany completed the demolition of the European consensus on torture.

Since the Second World War, the international human rights movement has emerged, with Amnesty at its head. Now, at least, there is one place in the world where the screams from the cells can be heard. Yet torture continues to pay: régimes which come to power through force of arms, and whose legitimacy does not repose on respect for the constitution – Greece, Chile, Argentina, Turkey – have found that torture, indiscriminately applied for purposes of intimidation, can serve as a substitute for consent. Yet as these examples show, the obedience which torture purchases is fragile: three of the régimes which used torture to stay in power in the 1970s have been overthrown, and the fourth, General Pinochet's, is poised on the brink of collapse.

Liberal democracies have been provoked into torture in the 1970s by terrorism. The Red Brigades may have failed to force Italy down the road to the police state, but they did succeed in provoking their captors into violations of civil rights and, in the case of the Padua police, into proven instances of torture. Europe can demonstrate its commitment to its Enlightenment heritage only by refusing to succumb to the temptation of strong feelings. Nothing awakens stronger or more dangerous feelings than terrorism.

Peters also warns us against the lazy misanthropy which holds that we can no more abolish torture than we can abolish human cruelty. Thus an Argentinian trade unionist, interviewed by V. S. Naipaul, and cited by Peters, remarked at the height of the Argentin*ian decade of torture that because torture also* meant "poverty and frustration", those responsible for these injustices deserved torture themselves; from this perspective – which fails to make elementary distinctions between torture as an instrument of the state and human cruelty and injustice in general – the idea of an Argentina without torture was bound to seem utopian. As this exemplary exercise of historical precision demonstrates, the abolition of torture is not utopian. We abolished it once; we can do it again, and this time for good.

Shaking with indignation

John McManners

CATHERINE-LAURENCE MAIRE (Editor)
Les Convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard: *Miracles, convulsions et prophéties à Paris au XVIIIe siècle*
268pp. Paris: Gallimard. 82 fr.
2 07 070314 2

Cornelius Jansen, bishop of Ypres, read all the works of St Augustine ten times and the works on Grace twenty-nine times, and died from a disease from the dust of old books, leaving behind him a vast Latin tome proclaiming the uncompromising doctrine of Predestination as against the Jesuit Molinos's validation of Free Will. In France, in 1643–4, Antoine Arnauld defended Jansenius and attacked the casuistry and laxity of the Jesuits; from his controversies arose a confrontation and a "Jansenist" party. To some extent, the party was an invention of the Jesuits, a corral into which they herded diverse opponents for convenient branding as gloomy heretics. "The Jesuits have a phantom they call Jansenius upon whom they heap a thousand insults", wrote Mme de Sévigné.

Under cynical political pressures from the French government, and for self-aggrandisement, the Papacy condemned propositions in Jansenius which – word for word, at any rate – no one could find there. Thus was created a Jansenism of allegiance to *vérité* – supporters of truth who accepted the condemnation of predestinarian theology, but would not bow the head on "the question of fact". Hence the disastrous Bull *Unigenitus* of 1713, condemning 101 propositions in a Jansenist book of devotion which for forty years had been regarded as a masterpiece of piety – some propositions being recognizable as the actual words of Scripture. Since the condemnation was "global", with twenty-four adjectives vaguely listed as generally applicable, *Unigenitus* was a sort of "Catch-22" trap to entangle Jansenists in a resounding censure which was irrefutable because of its inbuilt ambiguity. Appeals and renewed appeals to a General Council of the Church against the Bull followed, especially from the clergy of the diocese of Paris. The Government responded by backing up the ecclesiastical authorities in inhibiting and victimizing appellant priests. The lawyers of the Parlement of Paris defended the persecuted clergy, and a ground swell of support for them arose among the Parisian population, more particularly in certain parishes.

On May 1, 1727, the deacon François de Pâris, son of a prominent legal family, a Jansenist whose brief life had been a catalogue of astonishing self-denial and austerity, died, and was buried in the "Little Cemetery", of the parish of Saint-Médard. Miracles of healing took place at his tomb. Never were miracles so well attested; thousands of documents have come down to us giving the testimonies of witnesses, duly certified before notaries – the Jansenists saw to that.

Then convulsions began around the tomb, and the cemetery became a resort for throngs of sightseers. To end the disorder – and the Jansenist propaganda – a royal edict closed the place. As everyone knows, a wit put up a verse;

De par le Roy défense a Dieu
De faire miracle en ce lieu!

The *mot* of the philosophic *abbé* Terrasson is less well remembered: "Ce que je trouve de plus plaisant, c'est que Dieu ait obéi." In fact, the convulsions did not end, but took place henceforward in private houses, away from the scrutiny of the police. There were prophesyings and mystical utterances – some outpourings of genuine religious fervour, some resembling Voltairean *contes* or Kafka-esque dreams, some verging on the crapulous. The practice of *secours* to relax tensed muscles became an institution of pious torture, decorously given and meekly and prayerfully welcomed. There were crucifixions; from 1758 to 1789, twenty convulsionaries were regularly nailed by the hands and feet; one (unusually), a man, Frère Innocent, underwent the terrible penitential exercise eighteen times within five months in 1765.

The full story of these miracles of healing, then convulsions, is given in well-chosen extracts from the original documents, accompanied by a learned commentary, in Catherine-Laurence Maire's new volume in the well-known "Collection Archives" of Gallimard, *Les Convulsionnaires de Saint-Médard*. There is no doubt at all this really did happen, and in spite of the sado-masochistic undertones of some of the events, all was taken seriously by some seriously religious people. Thanks to the records of numerous arrests by the police, we have sociological analyses of those concerned; mostly women, but numerous men as well, mostly lower-middle-class, but plenty of lawyers and men of substance, and some nobles. So it is impossible to say that these goings-on were the doings of a lunatic fringe.

They were, like the outbreak of prophesying among the Protestants of the Cévennes, a reaction to persecution and suppression, a popular version of religious protest, all the more vehement because most of the appellant clergy had been silenced. They took place against a background of yearnings towards a lay and democratic spirituality, and towards finding a role for women in the Church, which were implicit in some aspects of Jansenism, and were denied all natural outlets.

No doubt there is much to be said, by way of explanation, from the medical point of view. Catherine-Laurence Maire does not venture to cite modern clinical works, but she publishes picturesque extracts from eighteenth and nineteenth-century medical texts which make strange reading. Dr Philippe Hecquet, a Jansenist who deplored convulsionism, in 1733 published his *naturalisme des convulsions*, an account of the body as a hydraulic machine regulated by the movement of the fluids – in the case of women, easily thrown out of gear by erotic imaginings causing uterine *vapeurs histériques*. Dr Calmeil, of the asylum of Charenton, in 1845 devoted many pages to an explanation by inventing a new name, "Théomanie extato-convulsive"; Dr Charcot of the Salpêtrière in 1872 rejected Hecquet's sexual explanation and described the beatings and cruelties of the *secours* as not inappropriate empirical treatment for hysteria.

But even with the full apparatus of modern medical and psychological investigation, there can be no one formula of explanation. To be understood, the story has to be followed week by week in detail enmeshed with the religious and political events of the French capital, and to do this, it is indispensable to read B. Robert Kreiser's *Miracles, Convulsions and Ecclesiastical Politics in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Princeton, 1978). This is a remarkable and learned study of the whole movement in the 1730s and it has the merit – as does Catherine-Laurence Maire's book – of taking the whole convulsionist movement seriously. It also initiates a discussion of the important question of the relevance of the Jansenist prodigies to the Enlightenment attack on the Christian miracles. The occurrences at Saint-Médard were better authenticated than the gospel stories, yet the Church held that they were fraudulent, or that, even if they weren't, they proved nothing anyway. The leading Jansenist theologians saw the danger and repudiated convulsionism. In the end, we all do this. It is uncomfortable to see what rebarbative forms genuine spirituality can take. We do not like mysticism when it begins to shade into madness, and when it does, we can tolerate it only when it remains cerebral.

An urge more vital than sex... the impulse to create...
THE FIRST MAJOR BIOGRAPHY OF OTTO RANK...
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Rehearsing the uprising

John Robertson

A. J. YOUNGSON
The Prince and the Pretender: A study in the writing of history
270pp. Croom Helm. £16.95.
0709929129

A. J. Youngson is one of the most original of modern Scottish historians. His masterpiece, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh* (1966), is an economic, social and architectural history of the New Town of Edinburgh, seen as the still living creation of Enlightenment civilization. But Youngson has had an equal interest in the other Scotland, the Highlands, whose ancient Gaelic civilization decayed and died just as that of classical Edinburgh rose and flourished. *After the 'Forty-Five*, which followed in 1973, is an innovative study of the economic impact on the Highlands of the failure of the Jacobite rising: in it Youngson combines sympathetic understanding of the Highlanders' plight with an unusual appreciation of the ideas and efforts of those who came in to improve the Highland economy. Now he has turned to the 'Forty-Five itself, with another original idea: *The Prince and the Pretender* presents the story of the rising in two separate versions, Hanoverian and Jacobite, as a general lesson in the unavoidable partiality of historians.

The subject is well chosen for the purpose. Scottish history is particularly prone to sharply contrasting treatments: as an issue for historians to divide over, the 'Forty-Five is second only to Mary Queen of Scots. (In the preface to his previous book Youngson noted that approximately three-fifths of the books concerning Scotland in a famous American university library are about Mary, the remaining two-fifths about Bonnie Prince Charlie.) Faced *with volumes of bitter controversy over Mary, impartial Scottish historians from Hume to* Gordon Donaldson have striven to achieve a more balanced judgment. Given similar division over the 'Forty-Five, Youngson, by contrast, rehearses both sides' stories anew, each in terms which remain within the proper bounds of scholarly history, and leaves the balance to be struck by the reader.

Youngson does not, however, set the problem in a specifically Scottish context. In his introduction, he deliberately generalizes. The historian, he believes, is as subject as any to the principle that "all perception is selection". It is not simply that historians must select from what is available in order to be coherent and retain the interest of the reader. But the historian will inevitably select on the basis of his or her own personality and attitude to life. Oakeshott, Youngson argues, is mistaken to believe that historians are properly interested in the past only for its own sake, and that a "historical past" can be distinguished from the "practical past" which is subordinated to present concerns. On the contrary, there is no clear line dividing history from propaganda. The genuine historian does, of course, try to avoid double standards in his use of evidence. But he may still colour his interpretation by a range of devices – choice of emphasis, imputation of motive, incidental characterization. In the end, the bad historian comes very close to the good propagandist. It is for the reader always to beware.

Neither of Youngson's own accounts of the 'Forty-Five is ever less than the work of a genuine historian. Eschewing emotion, he achieves difference by selection and emphasis. In the Hanoverian version the mistresses of James, the old Pretender, are mentioned to account for his unhappy marriage. But they are omitted from the Jacobite version, in which James III & VIII is simply dull and worthy. Egotism and self-deluding vanity are the qualities of the Young Pretender emphasized in the Hanoverian version; but in the Jacobite story the Prince is charismatic and purposeful, his self-delusion explained by his exile's upbringing and inexperience of Britain.

More important than such nuances in characterization are differences of perspective. The Hanoverian story takes off from the geopolitics of British–French rivalry after the Glorious Revolution: in this perspective, the rebellion is little more than a conspiracy inspired by mainly Irish – Jacobite exiles, its success dependent on French support. By contrast the Jacobite story begins with the martyrdom of Charles I: the motive forces of the rising are presented as Stuart loyalism and the martial values of the Highland clans. On the Hanoverian account, the rebellion was "a desperate undertaking"; on the Jacobite, a noble tragedy.

This form of presentation has obvious advantages. Different aspects of the 'Forty-Five are brought into focus in each account, and readers are effectively invited to decide their relative importance for themselves. But there are drawbacks too. There is little examination of the extent to which the Hanoverian and Highland worlds had already interpenetrated. The Jacobite story treats the Highlanders as members of a traditional, non-commercial civilization; the Hanoverian notes that Cameron of Lochiel, a vital early supporter of the rebellion, was a keen, commercially minded exploiter of the resources of his lands. What is missing from both accounts is the recognition that critical tensions had been created before the 'Forty-Five precisely by the intrusion of commercial values and practices into the Highland way of life. The point has recently been emphasized by Bruce Lenman, but it was first explored long ago in the novels of Scott.

Youngson's accounts of the rising could probably have been adjusted to incorporate such interconnections. More fundamental, I think, is the danger that the two accounts may have excluded other perspectives. One of the puzzles of the 'Forty-Five is that it seems to have had so little impact on the Lowland Scots, except when they were actually at the mercy of the Jacobite army. Edinburgh tamely yielded when Charles occupied the city and proclaimed his authority; but within two weeks of the Prince's departure for England the previous Scottish authorities had returned and resumed control. Youngson explains the Lowlanders' behaviour straightforwardly in terms of the given allegiances. Hard-headed realism – an eye for the spoils of patronage – and firm Presbyterianism kept them Hanoverian most of the time; but a latent Scottish nationalism and resentment of the Union opened them briefly to the appeal of the Stuarts. It is arguable, however, that the Lowlanders did not simply make a choice between the two opposed "sides"; they had a point of view of their own.

For them the Union had not been designed "to bring Scotland under the control of Whig ministers in London". Quite the contrary: the Lowland lairds and lawyers meant it to secure their release from over-mighty Scots magnates and interfering English ministers alike. In this they were mainly successful, administering eighteenth-century Scotland with a large measure of autonomy, while leaving "politics" to distant Westminster. Without such relative autonomy and the self-confidence it bred, indeed, the Scottish Enlightenment could not have flourished, classical Edinburgh could not have been built. There was of course a price to be paid: the Lowlanders had to deprive themselves of the ability to construct political and military institutions to secure their relative independence. They had no choice, therefore, but to yield before the Jacobite army, and to await deliverance by English troops. But they had every reason to remain indifferent to the Jacobite cause, and to seek to diminish the English presence once the work of repression had been done.

To have appreciated the Lowlanders' point of view, its strength and weakness, would have required going beyond the purely two-sided view of the 'Forty-Five. If Youngson has not done so, it is no doubt partly because the 'Forty-Five was an almost exclusively military rebellion, and the battles which must figure prominently in any version of the story were fought between two armies. But perhaps it is also because the two sides, the two viewpoints, have since become historical shibboleths. It is just as with Mary Queen of Scots, whose popular association with Bonnie Prince Charlie Youngson might have recalled. The polarization of interpretations of the 'Forty-Five has become so much a part of Scottish historical culture that without a deliberate attempt to do so, even the genuine, professional historian will not escape its influence. To have taken account of the way in which the division between Hanoverian and Jacobite has been thus entrenched would not have narrowed the significance of Youngson's study. His general lesson could have been enlarged, the partiality of the historian being shown to be the product of historical culture as well as of individual preference. The Scottish edge to the book would then have been that much sharper, laying bare the taste for simple polarization which has too often plagued the writing of Scottish history.

Back to the normal naughtiness

John Miller

RONALD HUTTON
The Restoration: A political and religious history of England and Wales 1658–1667
371pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £17.50.
0198226985

It might seem strange to suggest that the period of the Restoration of Charles II has been unduly neglected by historians. It is true that the years 1658–60 seem chaotically confused: once the dominant figure of Oliver Cromwell was removed from the scene, unpopular régimes dependent on military force succeeded one another with bewildering rapidity until, early in 1660, the taciturn, tobacco-chewing General Monck marched down from Scotland and paved the way for the return of the Stuarts. The early years of Charles II's reign, however, seem as familiar as any in the seventeenth century: a time when courtly wit and frenetic self-indulgence contrasted starkly with the scourges of plague and fire. This sense of familiarity owes much to Pepys's incomparable *Diary*; in addition, the air of gaiety, decadence and general naughtiness has proved a strong attraction to "popular" historians.

More scholarly historians, on the other hand, have shown only a limited interest in the period. For a long time it seemed that the great task facing historians of seventeenth-century England was to explain the Civil War. Surely, it was argued, such a cataclysm must have been the product of profound, long-term tensions of some sort: perhaps political and religious, perhaps economic and social. And if the causes must have been profound, so too must the effects: after such upheavals, England (it was assumed) could never have been the same again. Hence the keys to the history of seventeenth-century England were sought in the period before 1642, or at the latest 1649. The 1650s were comparatively neglected and the later Stuart period was seen as a time when these earlier changes worked themselves out. To this conviction was added in some cases a deep distaste for the Restoration and all its works; this was found among both historians sympathetic to the radicals of the 1640s and 1650s and those who applauded the creation of a more liberal political system after 1689.

In recent years, the emphasis has started to change. More historians now see the Civil War as an avoidable disaster brought about by Charles I's perverse inability to operate a basically workable and accepted political system. Not only did most of the participants not want civil war, but most of those who opposed the king were horrified when their victory ended in the abolition of monarchy and the establishment of military rule. The Restoration could thus be seen as a return to a normality which most people wanted to last. If that was so, the restored monarchy could be seen, not as an uninteresting appendix to more significant developments, but as a viable régime, worthy of study in its own right. It might even have developed into something like an absolute monarchy, a prospect regarded with less abhorrence by many present-day historians than by their Whiggish predecessors, such as Macaulay or Ogg.

In many ways, Ronald Hutton's book illustrates these trends. He is a young historian who has moved from the 1640s into the Restoration period, bringing with him that awareness of the interaction of centre and localities which has recently done so much to enrich our understanding of the mid-seventeenth century. His book is massively researched. The jacket claims that he has "made use of all the manuscript sources in central and county collections and most of those in civic and private hands": if this is an exaggeration, it is a pardonable one. The subjects covered range widely, from high politics to the persecution of Quakers, from precautions against plague to the products of the press, from civic festivities and public executions to naval administration. Hutton shows a commendable grasp of detail and weaves together the disparate elements in history with considerable skill. His style is lively and interesting, with *many illuminating* anecdotes and telling phrases: thus Sir Henry Vane is described as "one of history's most notable examples of that perennial type, the radical intellectual from a privileged family". More exotically, but no less aptly, Heselrige is likened to a rhinoceros. This combination of erudition and readability establishes the book as much the best account of its period. It ranges far more widely and deeply than the early part of Ogg's *England in the Reign of Charles II* and is much more lively and perceptive than Godfrey Davies's pedestrian *The Restoration of Charles II*.

That said, the book also has weaknesses which in some ways spring from its very virtues. In his eagerness to get away from the traditional preoccupation with the constitutional aspects of the Restoration, Hutton often deals with them cursorily and inadequately. To take just one example, his account of the grant of the excise in 1660 is rushed and confused and neglects to mention that half of it was granted as compensation for the abolition of feudal tenures. Perhaps more damaging than such specific errors is a tendency to become too immersed in detail, to a point where he seems unable to see the wood for the trees. *Too often* the highly perceptive analytical points are not placed in a wider context. Rarely, for example, does Hutton step back and consider at length the character and intentions of Charles, or Clarendon, or even the Duke of York. He tries to assess Monck's motivation, only to decide rather arbitrarily that his main concern was religion, although elsewhere he suggests that Monck aimed to re-establish order in both church and state. He does not systematically discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the restored monarchy, or the mentality and motives of the members of the Cavalier Parliament. There are many thoughtful comments scattered through the narrative, but he does not draw them together or seek to reconcile the contradictions between them. He does not consider the court as a centre of politics: he claims that a divided council was a handicap when dealing with Parliament, but one could argue that it was politically advisable to have a variety of viewpoints represented at court and on the council, so that all could hope to influence government policy.

Hutton mentions that political divisions emerged after 1660, but does not systematically define them. It is not that he is incapable of wider analysis, as is shown by an excellent short chapter on "the road to Restoration", but once past 1660 he seems overwhelmed by his material and his concluding chapter is muddled and vague. This starts by claiming that the Duke of York had no "heirs" in 1667 (he had two daughters, both of whom became queens of England) and ends with sentences such as "one generation was being succeeded by another and men who survived the transition often did so with very different ideas". In short, despite his scholarship, expertise and intelligence, Hutton seems to lack a clearly articulated overall interpretation of the period. One reason may be that his knowledge of the latter part of Charles's reign seems hazy: it cannot be easy to assess a settlement if one is not very sure how it worked out, except in the short term.

It would, however, be unjust to Hutton and his book to conclude on such a critical note. This is, by any standard, an important book, full of insights and information. Hutton talks modestly of "clearing the ground" upon which future historians may build. It would be fairer to say that he has taken possession of the ground himself and constructed a major contribution to the history of later Stuart England.

All for the workers

D. G. Charlton

K. STEVEN VINCENT
Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the Rise of French Republican Socialism
320pp. Oxford University Press. £40.
0195034129

"Utopian, mutton-headed socialism": Marx's contemptuous accusation against the early nineteenth-century French reformers from Saint-Simon and Fourier onwards has stuck, and unfortunately so in K. Steven Vincent's view, for Dr Vincent holds that Marxist misrepresentations have persisted even among non-Marxists and have clouded appreciation of the whole socialist tradition in France. In reality, he argues, this has remained distinctive down to Jaurès and Blum in our own century: less pragmatic than the British and less theoretical than the German. Marxist hostility towards it mirrors "a fundamental divergence" in both theory and culture within Continental socialism – still persisting to this day, one may well think, in the tensions between French Communists and Socialists.

Proudhon provides Vincent with what he believes is a key example to illustrate this very wide underlying thesis. Though a friend of Proudhon from 1844 to 1846, Marx thereafter attacked him as an eccentric, impractical *petit bourgeois* whose programme ignored the Hegelian dialectic of history and was in the end no more than a cautious palliative that would serve only to perpetuate bourgeois society. His "spiteful distortion" of Proudhon's thought has too often been accepted by historians since then, the author asserts, and his own study seeks to rescue it from both Marxist and other mistaken interpretations – notably those that label Proudhon as utopian, as a nationalist and antisemite, or as a neo-liberal. Vincent admits that such characterizations derive in part from the sheer volume of his writings and from some "surface contradictions", but argues that "consistency and unity of purpose" can be discerned behind Proudhon's ideas on property, anarchism, mutualism and federalism.

Vincent's method in presenting his robust, far-reaching defence is that of an intellectual biography tracing, work by work, the evolution of Proudhon's social and political views, and set within the context of events and of the birth and growth of socialism in the France of the 1830s and 40s. The result is detailed, thorough exposition, tending more to description than to analysis, and illustrated with a wealth of reference and quotation – almost to excess, for this work began as a doctoral dissertation and retains some traces of that genre. Three major themes are crucial for a just appreciation. Vincent contends. In his first part Proudhon's moralism and republicanism are followed in their development down to 1846, the date of the *Système des contradictions économiques* which prompted Marx's first attack, whilst the second part examines at length his understanding of associational socialism from 1839 onwards.

First, and least originally, Vincent clearly demonstrates that even after Proudhon had moved from his early Catholicism to "antitheism" he was still animated by a deep moral, even semi-religious concern, centred on the values of justice and equality, that remained with him all his life. Here are obvious links with his fellow French socialists and their diverse secular religions (though he shared none of their absurder notions) and with the tradition that would persist right down to Blum's declaration that "socialism is a morality as much as a doctrine". Second, and more unusually, the author emphasizes Proudhon's commitment to republicanism (he brings out interestingly the influence here of Montesquieu and Rousseau) and his belief in control by the workers themselves as opposed to central authority. Parallel with "property is theft" there went in Proudhon's mind another less famous dictum: "community [by which he meant state ownership of property and centrist social and economic decision-making] is death". The contrast with Marx is profound – between a reformist reorganization of society and its economy and a revolutionary and totalitarian transformation. Here again, Vincent affirms, it was Proudhon, not Marx, who typified (and helped to inspire) the main thrust of socialism in France.

Yet these preoccupations with the morality of justice and with republican solidarity clearly do not dispose of Marx's jibe that they amounted to no more than "socialistic daydreams". It is in Part Two above all that Vincent seeks to defend Proudhon against the charge of utopianism. He concedes that little of substance emerges from Proudhon's writings as to the exact institutional form he foresaw for his future republic, and the detailed exposition given here of his ideas on property suggests continuing vacillation and unwitting prevarication. All the same he was seriously concerned with social organization, Vincent argues, and by virtue of his proposed innovations belonged to the French movement, albeit somewhat neglected, that may be "loosely designated" as associational socialism. Proudhon's plans for producers' and consumers' co-operatives, and for a federal arrangement of such workers' associations, cannot be dismissed as either eccentric or trivial when they are judged in the context of their age. They were widely advocated by others, notably by Buchez and Louis Blanc in his *Organisation du travail*, and were taken seriously and feared by Guizot and the right wing. Given the actual problems and the options available at the time, this associative socialism was "a reasonable and practical response" and accorded with Proudhon's basic determination to return control of the productive process to the workers. Here too he was in line with the central socialist tradition in France, and the book concludes with the claim that "if Proudhon was not *the* father of French socialism, he was *one* of the fathers".

Vincent's fellow-specialists – and it is largely to them that this book is addressed – will certainly find it necessary reading and respect its scholarly carefulness. American academics seem to have paid more attention to Proudhon in recent years than their French or British counterparts, and Vincent's is a further useful contribution to the study of a still fascinating thinker. At the same time, however, it will not entirely convince even non-Marxists that he was as hard-headed and coherently realistic as is here suggested. Perhaps Proudhon's fascination lies above all in the complexities and uncertainties of an honest mind still searching – at the moment when all other socialists too were still searching to find *their* socialism.

A poetaster in his place

Norman Hampson

MICHEL VOVELLE
Théodore Desorgues ou La Désorganisation: Aix–Paris, 1763–1808
285pp. Paris: Seuil. 99fr.
2020086069

In his introduction, Michel Vovelle describes his book as falling into the increasingly popular category of "l'étude des 'cas'", as exemplified by the work of Carlo Ginzburg and Nathalie Zemon Davis's *Martin Guerre*. The *cas* is a case-history that also illustrates a general trend or situation and the genre has its attractions but also its inherent risks and limitations. It is an *invitation* to virtuosity that allows distinguished historians to demonstrate their skill in finding evidence about the apparently unknowable and to widen the conventional scope of historical enquiry by drawing on the resources of such disciplines as sociology and literary criticism. Vovelle does this brilliantly. His success in uncovering evidence about very obscure people, his awareness of where to find information about such matters as the cultural life of Aix-en-Provence in the eighteenth century and his command of the historical background to his hero's career are a demonstration of professionalism of the highest order. His conclusions, however, are more open to argument and suggest some of the dangers implicit in the genre.

His subject is the deservedly forgotten poet who composed the words for the hymn to the Supreme Being, performed at Robespierre's religious festival in 1794. The first third of the book, however, concerns the poet's father. Jean-Pierre Desorgues was the son of a village notary who moved to Aix, where he practised as a barrister. Vovelle believes that, in late eighteenth-century France, opportunities for the advancement of middle-class people were contracting, and he cites Jean-Pierre as an example of this. He may be right about France as a whole, but this particular demonstration is unconvincing. When he died in 1784, Desorgues *père* was one of the wealthiest men in Aix; he had acquired transmissible nobility for his family and established his elder son as *conseiller à la cour des comptes*. Like most of us, he did not always get everything he wanted, but for the son of a village notary, this was not bad going. If it represented some sort of a closing of doors, things must have been pretty hectic when they were open. Vovelle, however, describes Jean-Pierre's minor disappointments as a *chute*, which is difficult to understand, unless he is referring to his death by falling from an upstairs window.

When he comes to Jean-Pierre's son, Théodore, who was one of the more successful providers of uplifting verses for state occasions, from 1794 until the end of the Directory, Vovelle has virtually nothing to go on, apart from the poems themselves and an ambiguous account of a brawl between the poet and one of his neighbours. He essays a literary analysis of the works, but Théodore was such a dreadful poet that it is very difficult for anyone to penetrate beyond the parade of sentiments appropriate to the occasions that were being celebrated. Vovelle makes the most of his very limited opportunities: Desorgues did have a curious admiration for Italy, as a perennial source of inspiration to France, even to the chauvinistic *Grande Nation*, but there is not much meat to be extracted from these singularly dry bones. To argue that Desorgues remained a defiant republican, because of his publication in 1799 of an anti-clerical pantomime, the *Pope and the Mufti*, is perhaps going rather far. No one could have done more with this material than Vovelle, but it is not much.

Desorgues, like Sade, was committed to Charenton, where he eventually died. The place was used both for the insane and for political prisoners, although mainly, if not wholly, for the former at the time of Théodore's incarceration. The indefatigable Vovelle provides us with a diagram to indicate the annual rise and fall of investigations about candidates for release – whose relevance is not altogether obvious – but all his patience and ingenuity cannot explain why Desorgues was there. He quotes a nice story to the effect that he was arrested for declining a lemon ice, on the ground that "il n'aimait pas l'écorce", but other traditions suggest that he had become genuinely insane.

Vovelle insists that "any study of individual cases acquires value and significance only when referred to a collective milieu". His justification to devoting so much effort to the discovery of the Desorgues family is therefore based on the belief that its experience was somehow exemplary. At the end of his book he argues that Théodore – despite his excruciating neo-classicism – reflected a revolution in the cultural "structures of production" and revealed the "contradictions" of the society in which he foundered. "J'ai l'impression de rencontrer la société de la fin du XVIIIè siècle qui apprend à faire le bourgeois." When one remembers that the Desorgues were nobles, because of the brilliant career of Jean-Pierre in the years before the Revolution, that Théodore may well have been insane and that his brother frittered away the fortune that he had *inherited, this* all goes to make a very peculiar prologue to the rise of the bourgeoisie. Vovelle's quantification can only be applied to the surviving evidence, which is usually about what few of us want to know: for example, how many revolutionary poets were born north or south of a line from La Rochelle to Geneva. His individual cases do not confirm what he may well be right in regarding as general trends. Those who go hunting for *cas* are perhaps almost bound to give them Procrustean treatment and the quantification of the unquantifiable is an attempt to extract quarts from pint pots.

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Plastic pleasures

Peter Hainsworth

ANDREA DE CARLO
Macno
231pp. Milan: Bompiani. L16,000.

In a way the story of Macno and Liza is an ordinary tale of 1980s glamour. He, former pop-star, actor and television interviewer, is now the magnetically handsome president-dictator of an imaginary South American state, about to celebrate the third year of social renewal and harmony that his leadership has led the country through on its path to millennarian happiness. She is a young German television reporter, delicate but determined, who is caught breaking into the palace grounds with her cameraman and rescued from the savagery of the security guards by Macno himself. What follows is a passionate affair, in the course of which the media-wizard's finger-tip control metamorphoses Liza from self-confident reporter to adoring victim. But, for him, love (or is it a form of curiosity that makes Macno too a victim of almost any woman he meets?) has bloomed and faded many times. Only this time the experience coincides with a crisis of confidence about what he has achieved or can achieve as a political leader. So the personal drama is played out against a backdrop of intrigue and disillusionment among Macno's closest colleagues that eventually brings things to their violent climax.

Or so we might say. For the novel is more film-script than drama. Andrea De Carlo's style is flatly conversational, with Anglicizing and technocratic turns, and confined permanently to the present tense. His technique is to reduce emotions as such to the clichés of cheap fiction and advertisements, and to concentrate instead on externals – clothes, physical movement, things. The whole panoply of *modern technology – videos, personal stereos, exotic lighting, moving walkways, etc – is seen* as fascinating, even liberating and somehow normal, even if it eliminates from the human person (as it used to be) all concerns about significance, let alone transcendence. De Carlo's emphasis is on looking at this world, which may, or may not, be real, and on looking at the looking. Not for nothing is the book dedicated to Federico Fellini.

Pellizza da Volpedo's painting "Il quarto stato", which was cited in the credits for 1900, taken from Bernardo Bertolucci *by Robert Phillip Kolker (285pp. British Film Institute. £16, paperback £7.95. 0 85170 166 3).*

But De Carlo's lighting is softer than Fellini's. Poverty is kept for outside the palace. Except in moments of crisis the omnipresent security men are under control. In Macno's court things are relaxed or, with some strain, are made to appear so. Everyone is manipulating roles they have created, or the ones Macno has eased them into, with as much psychic comfort as they can muster. The only fool is the cameraman, who cannot see further than his lens and the money it is going to bring. The others – the bitchy American novelist, the botanist, the bodyguard, the politicos – take advantage of the freedom which Macno gives them to be, and simultaneously not to be, what they seem. At the same time, if they are no longer infatuated with Macno as Liza is, they are just as much in his power.

Offstage for much of the time, or present only in video-recordings of his career, Macno presents an image or series of images of mysterious and masterful fluidity, moving from role to role, from person to person, from gesture to gesture with perfect, if quite unnatural, ease, materializing only when he wishes and even in any single materialization always alternating between presence and absence in a disconcerting but enthralling way. More artist than politician, more seducer than tyrant, he is intolerant of all systems and programmes, including, in the end, his own. As he says to Liza, who eventually takes in the message, what counts is being able to keep your balance in the midst of instability, and this seems to include knowing how sometimes to lose it.

So an Italian archetype whose long history stretches back beyond Fascism finds in Macno its latest representation, with its sexual and political magic augmented by contemporary media and materialism. To some extent, De Carlo's detachment and Macno's own disillusionment with power undercut the myth, but in the end the book has it every possible way. All the wishes with which this dream is working are somehow satisfied, including those that want to be excused or neutralized. For those who like their art plastic, this is the real stuff – light, patently artificial and so flexible it is very hard to crack.

Pitifully provincial

John Gatt-Rutter

GUGLIELMO ZUCCONI
La smortina
211pp. Brescia: Camunia. L16,000.

The "smortina" of Guglielmo Zucconi's title is a mousy, self-effacing girl, working for her churchy parents behind the counter of the Telerie Venditti (a clothing materials shop catering for gentry and clergy), who steals the town Romeo – a former motor-racing ace disabled by an accident – from the up-market courtesan across the street, commits herself to motherhood with him on a night of her choosing at a country hotel and then discards him on becoming persuaded of his invincible fecklessness.

Guglielmo Zucconi builds up his heroine out of unlikely material, yet gives her, in the end, a convincing moral ascendancy over the pitifully mediocre and corruptible provincial society that surrounds her. Clementina emerges, in her solitary strength, lucidity, decisiveness and assurance, as a standard by which the shortcomings of others are measured. A foretaste of her future stature is given as a childhood anecdote. On being asked by her priestly uncle whether she ever forgets to say her prayers, her answer is: "Oh, no! I always say them. In fact, you know, I meant to tell you that I even say an Ave Maria to bring on the hour of my mother's death."

As a narrative argument Zucconi's is strong and wittily conducted, though it depends too much on Don Paolo Venditti, Clementina's uncle and only kindred spirit, the vicar of a mountain parish. Zucconi not only credits him with a (somewhat bogus) Christian wisdom but also with the family fortune. He posthumously sets the crown upon Clementina's moral deserts by means of an ingenious enigma written into his will. Zucconi's mockery of respectability and conventional values in this exposure of Catholic attitudes and behaviour acquires some extra-literary interest from the fact of his having both represented the Christian Democrats in the Italian parliament and written a satirical political fantasy novel, *Il compromesso pretstorico*.

The more lurid elements in *La smortina* include the murder of a priest in his own church, teenage violence, and the sexual misdemeanours of a whole town over forty years from the Second World War onwards. The style is at once elegant and accessible. Though extrovert, the narration is effective in laying bare people's shallowness and hypocrisy; the glamour and sordidness are made to serve the author's ends of displaying a person who creates her own values out of a bewildering moral chaos.

Peasant prohibitions

Judith Landry

GRAZIA DELEDDA
After the Divorce
Translated from the Italian by Susan Ashe
174pp. Quartet. £4.95.
0 7043 3485 2

The protagonists of Grazia Deledda's many novels about life in a peasant society all labour under the weight of ancient prohibitions. In *After the Divorce* (and this is not an encouraging book for those who wonder if there is life after this event) Giovanna and Costantino have contracted a civil but not, as yet, a religious marriage. Costantino is wrongly convicted of the murder of his miserly uncle and serves many years' hard labour. Poverty, and human nature, and the imminence of a new divorce law for the wives of convicts, cause Giovanna finally to remarry a base but wealthy suitor, Brontu; Costantino returns to his village after the discovery and death of the real murderer, and is driven to despair by his renewed proximity to, though not, at first, confrontation with his former wife. In the last three lines Costantino – aptly, in view of the book's pastoral setting – decides to be hung for a sheep and murders Brontu's conniving mother.

It seems strange that *After the Divorce* should have been thought worthy of Quartet's elegantly presented Encounter series, particularly in this unsteady translation. Peasant society is difficult to pin down, partly through over-exposure on the screen (Vittorio de Seta's film *Bandits of Orgosolo*, where no one has time to speak a word for two hours, captures the grim desperation of what one must assume to be the reality far better than Deledda's pretty but flat prose). If Deledda habitually describes her combative heroines as "unbroken fillies", if the sky is often crystalline and the mountains like sphinxes, and if a lot of people seem to have "little green eyes", this may be regretted but cannot be helped; but such phrases as "you bald head, get that into your nut", "pensive stillness", "rosy glow of dawn", "the fiery liquor flooded his heart with deep sadness", and "hope the devil bites it, you bitch" could surely have been recast. A group of unruly urchins in church is described as being like a "flock of moths" (in Italian they make a "brusio di topi").

What most people know about Deledda is that she won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1926, possibly, as Sheila Macleod suggests in her perceptive introduction, because there is something faintly Scandinavian about her work. Be that as it may, *After the Divorce* makes one feel that Deledda is less parochial than might have been expected.

Not so poor relations

Isabel Quigly

MICHELE PRISCO
Lo specchio cieco
245pp. Milan: Rizzoli. L18,000.
88 17 66568 1

An Italian southerner who writes about the bourgeoisie may modify his readers' ideas, since readers are conditioned to think there is no southern bourgeoisie. Workers and peasants on the one hand, picturesquely decayed noblemen on the other: this is the cliché view, even in Italy. Michele Prisco's South is already suburbanized, and fast becoming more so. One of the sadder threads in the narrative of *Lo specchio cieco* is the modernization (and, it is implied, though the point is not pressed, the total loss of spirit and character) of an old-fashioned provincial house. The lace curtains, the heavy furniture, everything that links the present with its immediate family past, is swept away. Even the garden is revamped with bright, deliberate flower-beds and shiny plants. The more rural and peasant-like the background, of course, the more urban and sophisticated its new owner hopes to make it. Not that this smartness is, to non-southern eyes, particularly smart: Prisco's social climbers try painfully to achieve the impossible.

Matteo, the narrator, is a novelist with writer's block. He lives in Rome with his quiet understanding wife, Elena, childless, in an atmosphere of peculiarly Italian social emptiness. Then, at a private view, he meets Margarita Attanasio and, *madeleine*-like, she takes him back to adolescence, to his southern past, to his friendship with Alberto Attanasio and his affection for the Attanasio family under the easy-going rule of Alberto's mother, Eleonora, who, slowly and painfully, dies. After her death, to the sons' disgust and everyone's amazement, the widower marries Eleonora's distant cousin, who has been working as a companion-housekeeper for the family.

Margarita's emergence from dingy serfdom appears to Matteo to symbolize the present-day South. When he first knew her she was (like the South in relation to the rest of Italy) exploited as a poor relation. She was despised sexually, socially, as a woman, as an orphan, and as a second wife whose only function seemed to be to produce a child and who failed to do so. When he meets her in Rome years later she is transformed, a widow not so much merry as radiant, beautiful, self-assured, a successful businesswoman dealing with government departments on behalf of her dead husband's firm, travelling up from the family house where she is now, openly, the mistress of her stepson, Alberto's brother Biagino. Prisco never actually asks how her liberation has occurred, if such changes are typical of the new South, or if they are at least images of the South's new confidence, brashness, modernity, prosperity. Oblique and devious, he seems to write these questions in invisible ink in the margins, and they are part of the point of a novel that pretends to be Matteo's literary therapy, not intended for publication, a mere oiling of the wheels of creativity, a sending of the bucket into the well of the subconscious.

Meanwhile, a book is gradually made (Matteo is almost a word-counter), and by the time Margarita has quarrelled with her lover-stepson over his male chauvinistic behaviour that would have been routine in the old South but is no longer acceptable, the book is finished. The self-consciousness with which Prisco tries to persuade the reader that this is all life rather than – indeed, as opposed to – art is tiresome. But his qualities remain: the long, slow, circuitous sentences gradually building up power and effectiveness, the set-pieces that linger as a sort of mental snapshot after the details of plot may be forgotten – a room, a moment, a face, weather, light, a seascape; the parallel studies of individual and society (Margarita, her environment), the melancholy style with its dying falls and almost tender intuitions, particularly where women are concerned. His roundabout methods have the mysterious boskiness of Margarita's lost garden.

Changing for the worse

David Montrose

JAMES LASDUN
The Silver Age
186pp. Cape. £8.95.
0224 023160

Being, as a rule, disparate in character, collections of short stories are awkward to name. "X and other stories" is the customary solution; but James Lasdun has found another, for his accomplished début collection, one which suggests a certain homogeneity among its contents. Most of these stories do convey a sense of people and things changing for the worse: the changes are often associated with growing older. In "The Bugle", for instance, the rediscovery of a forgotten toy reminds the protagonist of a blissful summer's day during his childhood. His present life has reverted to the pattern of that earlier time: after a lengthy absence teaching in Japan, he once again shares his parents' house. Now, though, a general air of decay prevails. His parents are infirm, their house run down; obtaining a job in declining Britain proves impossible.

Elsewhere, various types of corruption are powerfully apparent. Three stories deal with children's acquisition of worldly wisdom. In "Property", a young boy is just beginning "to make the connection between money and happiness", but this necessary departure from innocence results in obsessive avarice. The narrator of "Snow" wistfully recalls an occasion years past when he was confronted with evidence of his aunt's adultery with a neighbour and did not understand its significance. The "sorrowful descent into knowledge" came later. "The Spoiling", meanwhile, describes the circumstances which lead to a child's realizing that he commands the power to manipulate his divorced mother. In "Dead Labour", corruption takes the form of an artistic fall from grace: the twin inducements of sex and money lure a writer away from political theatre to restaurant criticism for a glossy magazine. Bad influence is also the subject of "England's Finest", in which a husband and wife encourage their adopted son to model himself on a supposed paragon who turns out instead to be an expert dissembler. Disillusionment, too, comes with experience. In "Heart's Desire", an intellectual working-class youth is fascinated by a trio of rich kids whom he regards as representatives of the elevated existence – "spaciousness of mind, tolerance, composure" – to which he has long aspired. Observation, though, reveals them as shallow and nasty. The main character of "Delirium Eclipse" believes himself to be, both personally and professionally, on the verge of great things. Events burst that bubble.

Lasdun's work is not distinguished by the kind of originality shown by, say, Ian McEwan and Clive Sinclair: it is closer to the traditional short story. He does, though, write outstandingly well: the blurb speaks accurately of his "sensuous lyricism". He is particularly adept at depicting a mind which perceives the world from an unfamiliar angle: that of a child most frequently, but also those of men disordered by illness ("Delirium Eclipse") and desperation ("Escapes"). His qualities are best seen in the more complex longer stories – "The Spoiling", "Heart's Desire", "Dead Labour" – but still inform even comparatively slight efforts, such as "Property" and "The Bugle", as well as a somewhat conventional twist-in-the-tailer like "England's Finest".

Devising destruction

Peter Kemp

KEITH COLQUHOUN
Foreign Wars
205pp. John Murray. £8.95.
0719542103

Foreign Wars seems intended as a sardonic parable about the dangers of indifference. What sabotages this aim is, ironically, Keith Colquhoun's own casualness. Startlingly lackadaisical about such matters as consistency, probability and motivation, his narrative is everywhere swayed by the arbitrary and slapdash.

The story opens with a couple in their sixties, James and Susie Palmer, taking a winter holiday in Agadir. In the first of many coincidences in the book, they meet at their hotel George Watney, an American soldier Palmer knew years earlier in the 1950s. It is some time, though, before this encounter establishes itself as a crucial strand in the main narrative. For, around it, loose ends dangle in all directions. The opening section of the novel devotes itself in some detail to the fact that Susie has lost her luggage en route to Agadir. But when the missing case eventually turns up, Colquhoun – mystifyingly getting nothing out of this – just shoves the matter aside. Other sections giving the impression of the start of some abruptly truncated plot litter the earlier chapters. Palmer appears to be forming something of a relationship with a German woman who frolics on the beach, until she's suddenly whisked out of the book. At a retirement party for Watney, a woman elbows her way to the fore, divulges that she has been passionately in love with him for years, then disappears from the story for good.

Mysterious migrants like these keep winging in and out of the narrative, perching prominently on the story-line for just a page or two. Pippa, a niece of Palmer's, springs into view during his unconvincingly motivated visit to a women's Peace Camp. Soon she's housekeeping for him, then in bed with him, then enigmatically off on her way again.

Even among those characters who manage to remain more or less at the centre of Colquhoun's ever-tilting world, mutability is routine. Palmer's wife – initially established as a spry and scrawny home-body of reasonably loyal habits – improbably informs him that she's had a one-night stand in Agadir. Not long afterwards, she announces, for no apparent reason, that she wants to "retire" from marriage and is leaving him.

Palmer, the man at the centre of these bemusing twists and turns, is presented as the epitome of the ordinary. This is one of the reasons why he is seized on by Watney as likely to be of use in an extraordinary plot that is being broached. The other reason is that Palmer served at Dunkirk and in Normandy. Watney, though a General, has never – to his chagrin – been in action. Accordingly, it is suggested, out of a sense of inadequacy he has devised a devastating scenario: the bombing of Charleston, South Carolina. Observing that the city is on much the same latitude as Hiroshima and is roughly the same size, he resolves to blast it with a limited-strike nuclear device on the anniversary of the dropping of the bomb on Japan. The rationale for this – it stands out as bizarre even in a narrative bursting with the preposterous – is that the attack will "take the fear out of the bomb" by demonstrating that a small nuclear charge will fall far short of bringing about global destruction. "Just as Hiroshima had been a turning point away from international war", Watney and his cohorts contend, "Charleston would be a turning point back": a means of restoring power and prestige to the military by revealing how – even in a nuclear age – wars can still be waged without generating Armageddon-like repercussions.

Watney's insistence that people will be insouciant about a limited nuclear strike is endorsed to a surprising degree by events in the novel. As bulletins come through about the charring of South Carolina, folks in North Carolina unconcernedly go about their daily business, fussing over whether hotel guests have enough towels and the like. Even Palmer finds he can't be bothered to buy a paper to read about what has occurred. Shruggingly, he reflects that it had been "said he would get sick of the subject, and he was already".

Presumably, this is intended as blistering satire on man's ability to close his eyes to the horrors of nuclear war. "There is none so blind as those that will not see" is one of the book's epigraphs. But eyes are scarcely likely to open in anything but incredulity at the far-fetched farrago *Foreign Wars* purveys. Inklings of this seem to enter even Colquhoun's mind as he ransacks the thesaurus for some word of sufficiently attenuated credibility to register his story's unlikely hypothesis: "It was . . . not probable, not even possible. Was there a diminutive of possible? . . . To say it was just possible would be too strong, although near possibility would be too weak. 'Barely possible' could be quite near. On a scale of one to ten, the possibility was perhaps one half of one, or less."

Fecund but flavourless

Jim Crace

DAVID GLOVER
The Love Island
159pp. Robin Clark. £8.95.
0 86072 086 1

David Glover's sentimentality and ingenuousness as a writer are evident from the titles of his two novels: *The Lost Village* and *The Love Island*. Both might pass as efficient – and appropriately rhapsodic – enticements for side-shows at Disney World, but on books with literary pretensions they are uninviting.

The Love Island charts Harry "Pongo" Mercer's life-long obsession with Pentoda – a tropical "amalgam" of Mauritius, Sri Lanka and cloud-cuckoo land – which was once pink on the map. Glover presents this invented paradise in prose that would shame the copywriter of a travel brochure. Pentodan wildlife, according to Pongo's notebook, is cloyingly idyllic: "With long curved bills [the bright metallic-hued birds] sipped nectar as they hovered motionless before trumpet-shaped flowers"; and, within a page, "the sparkling metallic-blue sunbirds with their curved beaks hovered before a flower". The women of Pentoda are no less exotic; they are oriental Stepford wives, "exceptionally loving and thoughtful towards their husbands. Often they have known each other since childhood." To make love to Maria Bezaleel ("Pentoda's very own Vera Lynn") is to experience a tropical fecundity equalled only by miracle rice. "A great force had been unleashed and was now in command of our being", comments Pongo, in prose as breathless as his physical condition, mid-coitus with Maria on the Pentodan hilltop:

> My penis seemed to be growing longer and thicker all the time. . . . Now look what is the highest thing between the Himalayas and the mountains of Antarctica. If only I had that little Union Jack . . . you could tie it on for me and acknowledge my rule.

Flying the wilting flag is, in fact, the theme of the novel. Pongo's WASPish relationships with this island of "enchantment . . . and enchantresses", with the MacLeod family of tea-planters, and with Maria (who becomes his wife), are intended to reveal the cultural ambivalences of the post-colonial generations. But Glover's prose is so derivative, flavourless and flawed, both sentimental in manner and exclamatory in tone, that any purpose to the narrative is stifled. *The Love Island* is a novel without style, energy or conviction by a writer whose skills are as insubstantial and steamy as Pentoda itself; it deserves to suffer the same fate as its oceanic neighbour, Krakatoa, which sank without trace.

"The Uses of Voluntary and Enforced Leisure" is the theme for the 1985 Odd Fellows MU Social Concern Book Award, worth £1,000, entries for which are now invited. Books of more than 10,000 words are eligible and should be submitted by September 30 to the National Book League, Book House, 45 East Hill, London SW18 2QZ.

Sergey smells

Christopher Hawtree

FRANCIS KING (Editor)
Twenty Stories: A South East Arts Collection
207pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.
0 436 23385 1
HELEN LUCY BURKE, RONALD FRAME, WENDY PERRIAM, CHRISTOPHER PRIEST, ROSE TREMAIN, WILLIAM TREVOR and ELIZABETH TROOP
Seven Deadly Sins
222pp. Severn. £7.95.
0 7278 1175 4

The short story has existed for so many years in an oxygen-tent of grants and publishers' intermittent philanthropy that a volume of them usually receives sympathetic murmurings, and the slightest twitch of life is enough to excite rapture. It is refreshing, then, to recall an uncollected *Spectator* piece which Graham Greene wrote at the end of 1936. In reviewing the latest of the many contemporary anthologies made by Edward O'Brien, an anglophile American with an almost reckless enthusiasm for the form, Greene set two extracts beside one from the latest issue of *Home Chat*. They cannot be told apart, and he did not give the answer:

> I doubt whether a magazine of short stories, in which the good will always be diluted by the less good, is desirable at all . . . . We see the effect of the short-story magazine in this anthology, where the excellent tales of Mr Bates, Miss Elizabeth Bowen and Mr Christopher Isherwood suffer from their proximity to the dull, the derivative and the pretentious: like individual clothes in a congregation they pick up the common "sergey" smell.

In a preface to *Twenty Stories*, the selection he has made for South East Arts, Francis King records his joy at the pile of typescripts which awaited him. The result of his sifting brings with it some modestly familiar names, as well as some refugees from creative-writing courses and local writers' groups. Railway journeys and funerals make their stock appearances, with the result that this short anthology, whose designer has left thirty-five pages blank, sometimes seems very long indeed.

One railway journey, however, which is made by the Reverend Whitaker in Kevin Jones's "Mab's Hill", develops into a diverting ghost story which, if it does not quite chill the spine, none the less makes one feel for the innocent cleric as the figure glides towards him, and "the dark aureoles of the breasts smothered him": an even grimmer fate awaits. (Francis King is surely right to point out Jones as the most distinctly promising of these writers.) After Gabriel Josipovici's routinely experimental "The Bitter End", Thomas Hinde's "Trust Mother Audry" comes as a relief. Religious functionaries do not have an easy time in this part of the country; the end of this brief tale, in which some nuns set about demolishing a tree, can be seen from the beginning, but it is no less enjoyable for that. Its spirited prose, something which is lacking in Hinde's later novels, quickly takes the reader to Mother Audry's smothered end: "Where her body emerged from below the great grey trunk horrible soft bulges seemed to fill her black habit."

Jealousy brought about such horrors, something which of course figures in *Seven Deadly Sins*, an anonymously edited collection whose limited numerical scope gives the contributors more space in which to work. There is a certain atmosphere of the dust being blown off in this anthology, which is perhaps better than writing to order, and some work shines brightly through it. Christopher Priest's "The Ament" moves far from its premise of anger, and manages to shock in a fire-and-brimstone sort of way. If William Trevor's elegant tale of petty, chilling avarice in Ireland suffers a little from its proximity to the strained efforts of Elizabeth Troop and Wendy Perriam, it gains from Helen Lucy Burke's magnificent, punningly titled "Three-toed Sloth". For this unblinking, malicious account of mourning and remarriage alone, the exercise was more than worth while. To even up the clerical matters, it is the clergyman's wife who meets a grisly end in Rose Tremain's contribution.

Death and the Sun

(Albert Camus, 1913–1960)

Le soleil ni la mort ne se peuvent regarder fixement.
– La Rochefoucauld

When the car spun from the road and your neck broke
I was hearing rain on the school bicycle shed
Or tracing the squeaky enumerations of chalk;
And later, while you lay in the *mairie*,
I pedalled home from Bab-el-Oued
To my mother silently making the tea,
Bent to my homework in the firelight
Or watched an old film on television–
Gunfights under a blinding desert sun,
Bogartian urgencies in the Ulster night.

How we read you then, admiring the frank composure
Of a stranger bayed by dogs who could not hear
The interior dialogue of flesh and stone,
His life and death a work of art
Conceived in the silence of the heart.
Not that he would ever have said so, no,
He would merely have taken a rush-hour tram
To a hot beach white as a scream,
Stripped to a figure of skin and bone
And struck out, a back-stroke, as far as he could go.

Deprived though we were of his climatic privileges
And raised in a northern land of rain and murk,
We too knew the familiar foe, the blaze
Of headlights on a coast road, the cicadas
Chattering like watches in our sodden hedges;
Yet never imagined the plague to come,
So long had it crouched there in the dark–
The *cordon sanitaire*, the stricken home,
Rats on the pavement, rats in the mind,
'St James Infirmary' playing to the plague wind.

'*An edifying abundance of funeral parlours*',
The dead on holiday, cloth caps and curlers,
The shoe-shine and the thrice-combed wave
On Sunday morning and Saturday night;
Wee shadows boxing in a smoky cave
Who would one day be brought to light–
The modes of pain and pleasure,
These were the things to treasure
When times changed and your kind broke camp.
Diogenes in the dog-house, you carried a paraffin lamp.

Meanwhile in the night of Europe, the winter of faces,
Sex and opinion, a deft hand removes
The Just Judges from their rightful places
And hangs them behind a bar in Amsterdam–
A desert of fog and water, a cloudy dream
Where an antique Indonesian god grimaces
And relativity dawns like a host of doves;
Where the artist who refused suicide
Trades solidarity for solitude,
A night watch, a self-portrait, supper at Emmaus.

The lights are going on in towns that no longer exist.
Night falls on Belfast, on the just and the unjust,
On its Augustinian austerities of sand and stone–
While Sisyphus' descendants, briefly content,
Pause at their factory gates to light a Gitane.
Malraux described these preterite to you
As no longer historically significant:
And certainly they are shrouded in white dust.
All souls leprous, blinded by truth, each ghost
Steams on the shore as if awaiting rescue . . .

One cannot stare for long at death or the sun.
Imagine Plato's neolithic troglodyte
Released from his dark cinema, released even
From the fire proper, so that he stands at last,
Absurd and anxious, out in the open air
And gazes, shading his eyes, at the world there–
Tangible fact ablaze in a clear light
That casts no shadow, where the vast
Sun gongs its lenity from a brazen heaven;
And beyond that an empty wilderness
Waiting in silence for his upraised voice.

DEREK MAHON

Adhering to detachment

Bernard O'Donoghue

MICHAEL LONGLEY
Poems 1963–1983
206pp. Edinburgh: Salamander. £9.95.
0 907540 57 0

This virtually complete collection of Michael Longley's poetry to date is very welcome, since his poems have been among the most regretted casualties of the tendency of publishers not to reprint individual volumes, even those as widely admired as Longley's *The Echo Gate*. The first thing to report is how magnificently the reclamation has been done; this new volume is certainly the most beautifully produced recent collection of poetry.

Both in form and subject-matter, Longley has always tended towards the classical. His most memorable effects come in brief moments of epigrammatic sharpness: a diving body disappears in water, "So opaque the element which could, / I knew, bend a stick at the elbow" ("The Swim"); or a familiar technical term is picked out of speech in an unfamiliar language: "Repeating itself at desperate intervals / Like the stepping stones across a river in spate" ("On Hearing Irish Spoken"). Fine examples of this classical brevity here are the sequences "Fleadh", "Carrigskeewaun", "Botany" and the new "Light Behind The Rain". When there is an attempt to extend these sequences into larger developments, as in "Oliver Plunkett", the whole often seems to be less than the sum of its parts: perhaps because it is in the nature of the epigrammatic observation to be brief, or because English as a word-order language finds it difficult to sustain terseness at any length (as Latin, say, doesn't). There is also a numbered, metrical eloquence in Longley which might be called classical English, as in the openings of poems like "In Mayo", with its echo of "Lycidas":

For her sake once again I disinter
Imagination like a brittle skull

(which incidentally reminds us, as many of these poems do, that we are listening to the mentor of Medbh McGuckian). Longley is classical too in the concentration of love poems, bearing witness to his liking for the Latin elegists.

Poems with classical forms and subjects are not his anthology pieces though, principally because, despite their accomplishment, they are not his most compelling. His most admired poems – "Wounds" and the "Wreaths" sequence (which includes the painfully effective "The Linen Workers") – are like the work of an entirely different writer with a preference for unadorned, conversational simplicity of statement. The eloquently anti-sectarian "The Greengrocer" is an example:

Astrologers or three wise men
Who may shortly be setting out
For a small house up the Shankill
Or the Falls, should pause on their way
To buy gifts at Jim Gibson's shop,
Dates and chestnuts and tangerines.

In *The Echo Gate* (1979), the most recent of the four major volumes represented here, this conversational voice was in the ascendant. "Mayo Monologues", for instance, had a new freedom of expression, more expansive than the epigrammatic inclination to close off rather than open out statement. The balance between a liberated voice and an impulse towards classical order is a difficult one to strike, but there were some major successes in that volume. In "The Linen Industry" all Longley's strengths and instincts are working together: a sense of community with strong metaphorical resonances:

the grubby town
Whose fields are compacted into window-boxes
And there is little room among the big machines;

Yeatsian eloquence, founded on classical aphorism: "What's passion but a battering of stubborn stalks?", and the amorous-erotic held delicately in check:

And be shy of your breasts in the presence of death,
Say that you took more beautiful in linen
Wearing white petticoats, the bow on your bodice
A butterfly attending the embroidered flowers.

Perhaps even here, in this highly successful poem, the amorous is the area of greatest uncertainty. Certainly Longley's large, mythopoeic presentation of sex seems to work against the contained expressiveness of many of his poems. "In Mayo", the opening of which is quoted above, reaches a pitch of grandiosity that lyric poetry cannot easily sustain:

Dawns and dusks here should consist of
Me scooping a hollow for her hip-bone,
The stony headland a bullaun, a cup
To balance her body in like water.

Behind these lines lies a topography founded in Irish myth, such as the stories of Diarmuid and Grainne; but it is hard to balance this against the personal lyricism of the opening of the poem. Moreover, some of the omissions from the earlier volumes might suggest similar misgivings in the poet himself. For example, in 1975 Longley thought well enough of the poem "Cross-Country" to use its last image (the brilliant one, a man flying a kite "fishing in the sky") as the title of the pamphlet in which it appeared. The explanation for its omission now might be that the pamphlet's hideous cover (a thigh-dominated, foreshortened picture of a naked woman with a stylized sun behind her) has come to represent for the poet a side of his work that he no longer finds to his taste.

Pluralism in the poetic voice is clearly an excellent thing. But in Longley's case it is hard not to feel that some of his forms and rhetorics are much more convincing and natural than others. He has a marvellous lyric voice, in poems like "In Memory of Gerard Dillon":

You walked, all of a sudden, through
The rickety gate which opens
To a scatter of curlews,
An acre of watery light.

His understated political poems express profound humanity (a very difficult thing to do, but to be expected of the writer of the enthralling autobiographical piece, "Tu'penny Stung" in *Poetry Review* 74, 4). But he has expressed uncertainty as to where best to put these strengths to use, in the early "Alibis" from *An Exploded View* (1973), as well as in the obscure but intriguing "Fleance" from *Man Lying on a Wall*. As the title and the title-poem of the latter volume suggest, Longley believes detachment to be an essential part of the poet's role. The problem is that detachment doesn't seem to suit him, and even seems to be freezing him into immobility. But his turning away from classic or mythic forms need not be silencing, since this book is full of poems that show Longley to have a rare capacity for commitment, sympathy and lyricism. He should give it its head.

Too close

GARETH REEVES
Real Stories
60pp. Carcanet. £4.95.
0 85635 520 8

Not "True Stories" but "Real Stories": the deliberate shift out of cliché is awkward and gauche, coming as it does to rest on "Real", a word breathy with sincerity and charm. That winsome supplication is the characteristic stance of these poems, set in both England and America. "To a Much-travelled Friend" addresses its subject in artless rhyme – "You, in your metropolitan attire, / Tamer of cities, lover / Of pavements at night in bizarre / Cafés, the curious rover" – through eight stanzas before the climactic ninth: "Talker, watcher, taster, unbeliever, / You are the constant friend, / Who, among the ruins you revere, / Will always honour feelings to the end." This poem sits up and begs for our affection with the crassest of appeals. It is more usually excessive irony and distancing which bedevil books of poetry these days, but here their almost complete absence is the disabling element. The most interesting poem, "Out of Bounds", deals with the death of the poet's housemaster, and celebrates "The feel of other lives next to our own": After his death, his French wife and their daughters were left to remember being "bemused / on the sideline in a surge of pent-up boys, / mother and daughters watching as bare limbs / linked and tackled across an English pitch." "The feel of other lives" gives this poem a fresh strangeness to which the rest of the volume hardly aspires.

Lachlan Mackinnon

Growing pleasures

Jane Grigson

F. A. ROACH
Cultivated Fruits of Britain: Their origin and history
349pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £25.
0631 139699
STAFFORD WHITEAKER
The Compleat Strawberry
128pp. Century. £6.95.
0712609199

The history of cultivated fruit – and vegetables – is not at all easy to establish as a rule. Clues abound, but in the absence of documents, let alone the survival of living specimens and forms, it is often difficult to trace origins and relationships, and genetic mysteries are many. Every now and then a book appears and offers us the most recent scholarship, which is increasing all the time. *Cultivated Fruits of Britain* (a life-work, I would say) pieces together scientific, pictorial, poetic, literary and archaeological information from many different sources.

One of the best accounts in the book is that of the cherry. Its history can be traced back further than most of our other fruits. F. A. Roach notes the Akkadian origin of the word itself, a link of twenty-eight centuries between us and the gardeners of Mesopotamia, the power of the fruit's pleasure causing its name *karshu* to survive and adapt itself to our languages, to the Greek *kerasoi*, the German *kirsche*, softened to *cilliegi*, *cerises* and cherries. He reminds us of Herodotus describing the pontucum cherry, grown north of the Black Sea by the Scythian Agippaei and protected in winter with thick white felt. He connects the fruit with Pliny's famous passage about Lucullus, soldier and lover of exquisite food, bringing the first cultivated cherries back to Italy from *Pontus*, after his victory against Mithridates in 74 BC. "And in 120 years they have got as far as Britain." Then come Langland, Gower, Chaucer and the poignant cherry fair and the history of the fruit's cultivation; finally he tells us that

Sadly the cherry orchards of England no longer occupy the place they did even 50 years ago, and imports of cherries from Europe invade the markets of Britain as they did in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries before the Flanders fruit was replaced by that from the orchards of Kent encouraged by the lead taken by Henry VIII.

The mention of Henry VIII – like that of several other royal personages – reminds one of Jefferson's just and generous observation that "The greatest service which can be rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture." Henry VIII encouraged and financed his fruiterer, Richard Harris, in his purchase of 105 acres at Teynham in Kent to house grafts of the best fruit that he could find in France and the Low Countries. Cherries (of course), apples and pears. Soon many gardeners were being supplied with scions of the new varieties.

On every page *Cultivated Fruits of Britain* has some illumination that alters one's view of things: walnuts (hazelnuts and walnuts are among the fruits discussed here) were used for black hair dye; Buckingham Palace occupies the site of James I's mulberry garden (his attempt to stimulate silk production in this country was unsuccessful since the trees planted were not the white-fruiting kind, but the black); the "family" tree, popular again now with its three varieties of pear or apple in one, goes back at least to the mid-sixteenth century; the oldest variety of apple in the National Fruit Trials at Faversham, the Decio, goes back to a Roman general, Ezio, of the fourth century; one pear maniac (pear mania being a happy affliction of the seventeenth century as growers attempted to increase the melting qualities of what was generally a hard, sometimes gritty fruit), Le Lectier in France, put out a catalogue in 1628 of the many pears that he grew (would recipients send him grafts of any varieties not listed: in exchange he would send them what they required) and the Williams' pear was developed by a schoolmaster at Aldermaston.

In this company it is easy to think that *The Compleat Strawberry*, with its charming colourful production, is a premature stocking-filler (the lack of colour in Roach's book, and the muzzy effect of the black-and-white illustrations, are a reproach to Blackwell's). But one must not be deterred by the title, since this small book is a keen and worthwhile celebration. The poetry, recipes, historical information – which is detailed – are followed by practical instructions for the gardener. With so many pleasures – strawberry borders from medieval books of hours, a 1514 Holy Family with Mary holding out a strawberry to Christ in Joseph's arms, a covetable Doulton strawberry plate, the illustration of the Chilean strawberry that Frézier brought back from Chile, to which we owe the great development of the fruit in the nineteenth century – it is perhaps unfair to mention the lack of Chardin's triumphant pile of (pre-Chilean) strawberries in a basket.

Fare reductions

Alan Davidson

ROBIN HOWE
The Mediterranean Diet: A traditional way to healthy living
208pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £10.95.
0 297 78471 4
ANNIE HUBERT
Le Pain et l'olive: Aspects de l'alimentation en Tunisie
152pp. Paris: Editions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique. 60fr.

In her introduction to *The Mediterranean Diet: A traditional way to healthy living*, Robin Howe admits to a certain bias towards the Italian Riviera, where she lives, but implies that the traditional "Mediterranean diet" has a similar basis throughout the region. On her title-page she cites as such a basis this list: "olives, olive oil, wine, figs, almonds, saffron, garlic, honey and goat cheeses". The combined effect of these ingredients should be sticky enough to exercise some binding power. Yet, as she points out, "the region, compared with any other of the same size, contains a uniquely wide range of peoples, ancient and modern cultures, peculiar climatic conditions and geographical differences".

The variations in diet produced by all these differences are not explored in depth by Miss Howe, and her book is mainly about the foodstuffs in the European Mediterranean diet. Those whose good intentions need to be fortified can read that they should not overeat, nor eat snacks between meals; that fibre and wine and salt are to be consumed in moderation; and that it is good to drink plenty of water, take exercise and look after one's teeth. Historical and anecdotal material is sparingly interwoven with nutritional information of a general kind. *The Mediterranean Diet* is pleasant and often evocatively written, but it is for the bedside table rather than the study.

To read Annie Hubert's meticulous account of what Tunisians actually eat is to enter another world. She describes the families with which she lived while recording the information; a good selection, with appropriate distinctions between the coast and the interior, the urban and the rural, the moderately affluent and the poor. There are few echoes of the fare enjoyed on the Italian Riviera. Tunisia is, after all, in another continent, although just as much a Mediterranean country as Italy or Greece.

Miss Hubert's purpose is not to extol the merits of Tunisian eating habits. Indeed her study was undertaken in the hope that it would shed light on the relatively high incidence of rhino-pharyngeal cancer among Tunisians (the other peoples thus afflicted being the southern Chinese and the Eskimos). And her conclusions, which take the form of recommendations for further study, call for a detailed examination of olive oil production; of the manner in which it and other vegetable oils and *smen* (butter prepared in the Tunisian manner and clarified) are used in cooking; and of the preserving techniques practised by Tunisians.

The idea that olive oil, in certain conditions, might be suspected of being harmful will shock those who count it one of the most healthy foods eaten in the Mediterranean. They will be relieved to hear that, if the cancer is related, it is likely to be caused by the effect on the oil of the unusually high temperatures which some Tunisian cooking methods entail. And they will revert with pleasure to the counsel which Howe purveys from a "group of American and Italian nutritionists", that we should cut down on animal fats and instead use "sensible quantities of olive oil or another fine vegetable oil". *Le Pain et l'olive* is carefully documented, including references to the late Dr Gobert's outstanding essay, "Les Rites alimentaires des Tunisiens", and the remarkably comprehensive collection of Tunisian recipes by Mohammed Kouki (still not available in English, alas). *The Mediterranean Diet*, with its broader perspective and different purpose, gives a list of other books which will appeal to the general reader, but is short on specific references to the medical papers which Robin Howe has evidently studied.

Savour and succour

George Ordish

ALLEN PATERSON
Herbs in the Garden
370pp. Dent. £12.95.
0460045202

Herbs are associated with the very origins of gardening, and it is from this point that Allen Paterson, now the Director of the Royal Botanic Garden, Hamilton, Ontario, starts the exploration of the subject in this fascinating and most comprehensive book. In fewer than 400 pages the author gives us a summary of the whole subject, starting with the definition of a herb and continuing with the history of herb growing, layout of herb beds, description and cultivation. He finds that herbs are of use to man in two principal ways, "life-enhancing and life-supporting". They are "for use and for delight", and as such present a great diversity of family, growth and species.

Though herbs are not the source of any major plant product, they have been used from the earliest times: Paterson finds references to their cultivation in records made in the third millennium BC in China and in Egypt. In Europe and colonial America their first uses were medicinal, but they were soon being used to improve food with their beauty and aroma. "Strewing-herbs", such as thyme, sweet flag and woodruff, were much used to ward off foul smells in Tudor households. Paterson discusses the famous old herbalists, Gerard, Culpepper, Fuchs, Parkinson and William Turner, castigating Gerard for describing plants that he had never seen and delighting in Turner. He sees the modern age of herb-growing as starting in Britain and the United States in the 1920s, an important influence being that of Gertrude Jekyll.

Paterson can be amusing: in discussing scientific names he describes botanists as falling into two classes, "Splitters" and "Lumpers" – those who always create new genera and those who combine two or more genera into one. But, on the whole, the book is thoroughly practical. An important section is the alphabetical catalogue of herbs: 166 pages devoted to the description, cultivation and use of some 400 species of plants are followed by an extensive planting chart. Attention is drawn to the poisonous nature of certain herbs, many of which are not well known, such as *Adonis vernalis*. A chapter is devoted to herb recipes, such as carrots and juniper, and delicacies such as green herb paté. The twelve colour plates are attractive – that of *Actaea alba* looking like a piece of abstract sculpture – and the seventeen line-drawings by Roger Mould are adequate, although their reproduction is a little weak. The plate of the Chelsea Physic Garden is reproduced from the engraving in John Haynes's *Accurate Survey* of 1735 and is not really a success: the scale is so small that one can scarcely read a word and the general effect is a blur. Apart from this minor defect the book is a delight.

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